PREACHING AS ETHICAL ACTION: A RESPONSE TO THE CONCENTRATION ON PREACHING IN BARTH AND BULTMANN FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

by

William Walter Johnson, B.A., B.D., Th.M.

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William Walter Johnson, Th.D.
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Supervising Professor: Paul Scherer

The problem addressed in this dissertation centers on the question of how the discipline of practical theology in the American situation is to respond to and appropriate the extensive discussion about preaching in the theologies of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann as preeminent and representative theologians placing major emphasis on the preaching of the Christian church.

The methods and procedures employed involve the following factors: (1) Examination of the works of Barth and Bultmann (and secondary material of a critical and descriptive nature) to discern why each focuses central concern on preaching and what each says by way of theological definition of preaching; (2) Critical response to the discussion of preaching in the two men; (3) Appropriation of the discussion of preaching in the two men; and (4) Proposal of a thesis in response to the focus on preaching in Barth and Bultmann.

The primary conclusions of this study indicate that the concentration on preaching in Barth and Bultmann stems from the concentration on revelation in the two men. (1) Central to Barth's concern in theology is the epistemological question of how man knows God. He argues that the sole basis for knowledge of God

resides in God's free choice to reveal Himself in Jesus Christ as the Word of God. He goes on to argue that Scripture and proclamation (preaching and sacrament) are forms of the Word of God, and in this scheme preaching is seen as correlate of revelation. He asserts that preaching is an integral form of the Word of God, is done in obedience to the commission of God, and is to be defined as a form of the church's witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. (2) Bultmann insists that faith is related to its object, God's revelation in Jesus Christ, and proceeds to define revelation as a present occurrence which puts the hearer in a new situation. In this scheme preaching (or kerygma) becomes the locus for revelation in the present, and preaching is thus seen as correlate to revelation. Bultmann's negative historical conclusions about the possibility of discerning anything about the historical Jesus other than the "that" of Jesus lead to a positive emphasis that it is in preaching that Jesus is present and significant. Various elements of Bultmann's Lutheranism contribute to the concentration on preaching as the means of proclaiming Christ today and confronting the hearer with the pro me affirmations of the gospel as challenge to his self-understanding. Preaching is defined by Bultmann as the locus of the eschatological event, as kerygma or 'personal address', as challenge to self-understanding, and as the present Word of God.

The major criticisms of the two men center on (1) the concentration on revelation suggesting that it is problematical from the standpoint of the Bible, that it is confusing, that it places undue concentration on the issue of epistemology, and that it exercises unwarranted control of exegesis; (2) the discussion of preaching as often abstract and remote, reflecting more a neat theological category than a concern for actual preaching; (3) and the difficulty in exegesis presented by the theologies of the two men, a matter of central concern for the preacher.

The positive appropriation of the two men argues that they present (1) the necessity of theologically defining preaching, a task often overlooked by practical theology; (2) the challenge of seeing preaching as the Word of God; (3) the challenge of seeing preaching as present expression of the reality of Jesus Christ; (4) the necessity of exploration of the meaning of Jesus Christ for the contemporary situation in preaching; and (5) the challenge of defining preaching as a form of the witness of the Church to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The major response offered argues that there is both need and basis for expanding the conversation about preaching to see preaching as an integral part of the church's ethical action in response to faith in the gospel. Suggestive cues are offered for consideration of the ethical responsibility of the sermon as representative action on behalf of the church, the ethical responsibility in 'hearing' the text of scripture as basis for what the preacher says, and the ethical responsibility of the preacher in the task of 'perception' of the significance of the text for the present situation of the hearers. The primary concern of the response, however, is to expand the conversation about preaching to include the recognition that preaching is indeed an integral part of the church's agenda of ethical concerns.

Dedicated

to

Professor Paul Scherer

Mentor, Friend, and

Father in the Faith

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of the distinct characteristics of contemporary theology is a concentration of concern for the preaching of the Church. In the midst of the various overtures of differing theological methods it is significant to note that repeatedly crucial issues in theology converge at the point of the Church's preaching.

This fact should come as no great surprise inasmuch as one of the 'givens' of the Church's existence is regular gathering for corporate worship in which the sermon is a central event. But there are some surprising facets of the present discussion of preaching. For one thing, the extensive focus on preaching is somewhat surprising from the standpoint of the American scene. The Church in America has not neglected preaching, but it is safe to say that in recent decades there has been a certain denigration of preaching. In the midst of the post World War II numerical growth of the church and in the midst of the wide-spread disillusionment with the institutional church in the sixties, our attention has been called to many facets of the church's life, but seldom to the cruciality of the sermon. Theological endeavors with a distinct American accent have given only peripheral attention to the sermon. Robert Funk, commenting on the Second Consultation on Hermeneutics at Drew University, reports that a panel of American scholars " . . . pointed to the decay of the preaching office in the

American tradition as a phenomenon worthy of sustained theological attention."[1] To be sure there have been numerous treatises published on preaching but these have come more from the practical side of the picture. Or one can mark as further evidence of the denigration of preaching in America the study made by Professor Samuel Blizzard[2] which documents the practical neglect of the preaching ministry of the church under the pressure of mounting demands of the institutional life of the local church. Or again, it may be that preaching is looked upon as ". . . a necessary evil."[3] From various quarters the practical denigration of preaching in the American situation can be documented. Consequently, it is somewhat surprising to behold the sophisticated theological discussion of preaching from the pens of leading theologians of our time.

A second surprising facet of the emphasis on preaching is implied in what has been said, namely, the discussion of preaching in contemporary theology finds its genesis not so much in the Practical field as in the field of Biblical and Dogmatic disciplines. The decisive works of Karl Barth in dogmatics and Rudolf Bultmann in New Testament studies underscore the cruciality of the sermon, and subsequently some of the most helpful discussion of preaching comes from men whose primary discipline is other than Practical Theology. In light of the Reformation heritage of Luther and Calvin this should come as no surprise, but the fact remains that too frequently the issue of the sermon has been left to the province of Practical Theology.

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[1] Robert W. Funk, "Colloquim on Hermeneutics," Theology Today, XXI, Number 3 (October, 1964), 289.

[2] Samuel W. Blizzard, "The Minister's Dilemma," in Robert Clyde Johnson, ed., The Church and Its Changing Ministry (Philadelphia: The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1961), p. 74 ff.

[3] Donald C. Miller, Fire in Thy Mouth (Nashville: Abington, 1954), p. 14 (quoting a letter of a ministerial candidate).

In light of such factors it is the intent of this essay to enter into dialogue with two particular Continental theologians where the concern for preaching is a central issue. From the perspective of a Practical theologian in the American situation the attempt will be made to understand and respond to the conversation concerning preaching found in the writings of a Continental Dogmatic theologian and a Continental Biblical scholar.

Before proceeding to the specific discussion of these two men it will perhaps be helfpul to discuss briefly (1) several characteristics of the present discussion of preaching; (2) the nature of the problem faced in this essay; (3) the methodology to be employed; (4) the basic rationale for the chosen delimitation; and (5) an introductory statement of the thesis pursued.

A. Characteristics of the discussion of preaching in contemporary theology

(1) The theological discussion of preaching is primarily Continental in origin. This statement simply intends to recognize the fact that the primary theological discussion of preaching takes its basic cues from developments in Continental theology. The contours of the discussion

have been manifestly shaped by the works of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann.[4] Subsequent study will attempt to document the pivotal attention on preaching found in these two men. The factor to be underlined, however, is that as their influence has spread the central concern for preaching has been taken up in different contexts and from different perspectives. Of course, disagreement with Barth or Bultmann in various particulars is quite evident, but the fact remains one major stimulus for extensive discussion of preaching has its roots in the works of Barth and Bultmann.

(2) The theological discussion of preaching has today moved into what can be loosely called a 'post-Barth' and 'post-Bultmann' stage. This is simply to recognize that the questions agitated by Barth, on the one hand, and Bultmann, on the other, have been taken up and developed in various ways and as should be expected succeeding generations have not been content to settle for a form of Barthian or Bultmannian scholasticism.

It is difficult to identify a closely knit group of 'post-Barth' scholars. Different cues are taken from Barth by a wide variety of theologians, but few have been content to settle for a rigid

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[4] It should be recognized that early in the twentieth century P. T. Forsyth, an English Congregationalist, voiced many of the concerns later developed by Barth. In his 1907 Yale lectures on preaching, Forsyth gave expression to a basic discontent with the state of preachint at the turn of the century. Many of the issues addressed by Forsyth have been taken up in various forms in the subsequent theological revolutions of the twentieth century, but the fact remains that Forsyth's writings did not get widespread attention. Though similar issues are discussed, twentieth century theology has taken its cues far more from Barth and Bultmann than from Forsyth. Forsyth's Yale lectures are published under the title Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind (London: Independent Press, 1907).

Barthianism. That some may tend to stay basically within the structures of Barth's framework of theologizing is apparent, but frequent warnings are issued on the danger of becoming a "Barthian."[5] Several patterns of appropriation of Barth's dogmatic endeavors can be discerned, however.

There are those, for instance, who maintain a basic sympathy for Barth's theology and yet acknowledge the necessity of moving beyond Barth.[6] Or it may be the case that the post-Barthian is characterized by both a basic sympathy and a basic discontent with Barthian structures.[7] Still another pattern of post-Barthian discussion is that in which polemic against Barth seems to occupy the focus of theological endeavors. In such writings there is frequently an acknowledged debt to Barth coupled with a consistent effort to argue against his presuppositions.[8] In quite a variety of patterns Barth has left his distinct imprint on the texture of contemporary theology and in this sense we can speak of 'post-Barthian' theologizing.

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[5] Cf., for instance, the chapter entitled "How to Avoid Becoming a Barthian" in Arnold Come, An Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics for Preachers (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), p. 130 ff.

[6] In this category such men as Hermann Diem, Helmut Gollwitzer, Heinrich Ott, and Dietrich Ritschl can be cited as representative though such listing by no means exhausts the list of significant theologians whose basic sympathies are Barthian.

[7] It is possible to place such a theologian as Paul Van Buren in this category. One can argue that Van Buren has radicalized Barth's Christomonism while significantly abandoning many other basic concerns of Barth's theology. Cf. Paul Van Buren, The Secular Meaning of the Gospel (New York: MacMillan, 1963).

[8] Representative of this category Gustaf Wingren comes to mind. Wingren appears to spend an elaborate amount of time pointing to what he considers to be fundamental weaknesses in Barth's theology. Wingren's Theology in Conflict (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958) is a deliberate critique of three theologians, one of whom is Barth. But more significantly in his The Living Word (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), Wingren evidences a consistent polemic against Barth while at the same time manifesting many affinities with him. The

A case can be made that there exists a more clearly defined group of post-Bultmannian theologians. Such men as Gerhard Ebeling, Ernst Fuchs, and Gunther Bornkamm, to name just three representative figures, work within basic outlines of Bultmann's concerns, though each in his own way explores different lines and seeks various corrections in Bultmann's work. There are, for instance, those who devote their attention to the problem of history posed by Bultmann and involve themselves in what has been labeled "the new quest of the historical Jesus."[9] Another decisive question raised by Bultmann focuses on hermeneutics and the widespread concentration on hermeneutics in contemporary

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point to be noted is the fact that Wingren seems to be compelled to argue with Barth again and again, and in this way Barth's questions do much to shape Wingren's writings.

James Barr's Old and New in Interpretation (London: SCM Press, 1966) gives evidence of this same characteristic. Barr acknowledges that Barth has had great influence on him, but that ". . . the intellectual framework of Barth's theology has in my consciousness to a very great extent collapsed in ruins." (p. 12) The result is that throughout the work Barr is involved in polemical discussion with Barth, and one gets the impression that though the framework on Barth's theology may have collapsed, the influence is still clearly present.

[9] The basic outline of this quest is detailed in James Robinson, A New Quest for the Historical Jesus (London: SCM Press, 1959). A broader portrayal of the struggles with the problematic of history in Bultmann's work is reflected in the two volumes edited by Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville, Kerygma and History (Nashville: Abindgon, 1962) and The Historial Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ (Nashville: Abindgon, 1964).

Biblical study and theology takes basic cues from Bultmann while seeking to move beyond his position. It is noteworthy that the focal point of New Testament study among post-Bultmann scholars has not been so much work with the text of the New Testament in exegesis, but far more attention is given to discussion of 'hermeneutic principles'.[10] The cluster of questions concerning history and hermeneutics which dominates much of the horizon of contemporary theology is not answered in narrow Bultmannian categories, but they do bear in many cases a definite post-Bultmannian imprint.

For our purposes the significant factor to underline is that in the different shades of 'post-Barth' and 'post-Bultmann' theology there is a recurring concentration on the preaching of the church. The departure from either Barth or Bultmann may be quite pronounced, but in many cases there is a continued pivotal attention devoted to the event of preaching.[11]

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[10] For a representative sampling of post-Bultmannian hermeneutical discussion see the two volumes edited by James M. Robinson and John Cobb, The Later Heidegger and Theology (New York: Harper and Row, 1963) and The New Hermeneutic (New York: Harper and Row, 1964).

[11] Two representative examples of this can be seen in the work of Heinrich Ott and Gerhard Ebeling. Ott, now occupying Barth's former chair in Basel, seeks to plough his own way beyond Barth and in doing so still manifests the central concern for preaching as evidenced in his Theology and Preaching (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965). Ebeling takes up his dialogue with Bultmann in Theology and Proclamation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), and while moving beyond Bultmann continues to keep proclamation in a central focus.

(3) Much contemporary theological discussion of preaching is tentative and exploratory. Such is implied in the reference to the 'post-Barth' and 'post-Bultmann' nature of present conversations. It is highlighted here simply to explain part of the rationale of this essay. The situation we face is one in which basic issues and questions raised by Barth and Bultmann are being pursued along different lines without any widespread consensus. That in itself is quite a healthy situation, but it also incorporates distinct difficulties for the preacher as he looks to his colleagues in the dogmatic and Biblical disciplines for guidance in his task.

One illustration of the tentative and exploratory nature of issues pertinent to the discussion of preaching in contemporary theology can be found in the Drew Seminary conferences on hermeneutics.[12] There are very suggestive ideas forwarded in hermeneutical discussions, but both the nature of the basic position papers and the suggested critiques offer eloquent evidence of the exploratory nature of suggestions forwarded by proponents of "the new hermeneutic." Braaten pointedly criticizes the "new hermeneutic" along several lines and suggests that ". . . the development cannot proceed further along the Fuchs-Ebeling line, if for no other reason than that Fuchs lacks clarity (no one understands him) and Ebeling lacks substance (the objective content of faith is reduced to a bare minimum)."[13] Braaten certainly has a point for unfortunately the discussion of the "new hermeneutic" is characterized by a bewildering array of new terminology and a confusing dependence on the later Heidegger's difficult definition of language. Robert Funk, commenting on the 1964 Drew Conference traces the conflicting lines of thought and reaches several revealing conclusions, namely: (1) the significance of the debate in hermeneutical discussions for the life of the church rarely came explicitly to expression; (2) there is confusion rooted in the problematic of Heidegger's thought as a point of departure for theology; (3) there is a marked tendency to abandon the thought of a transcendent God in favor of concentration on 'the phenomena', e.g., Jesus, faith, language of faith, the tradition; (4) there is a shift in the way of speaking of men in the sense that the sinfulness of man is no longer viewed as adequate to account for the monstrous evils which appear in history; (5) there is a certain apathy toward the institutional church, with some indication that a growing number of theologians and ministers feel they cannot go to church.[14] Such judgements are cited simply as an attempt to point to the tentative, exploratory, and often confusing and obscure nature of the discussion of hermeneutics.

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[12] Cf. Robinson and Cobb, eds., The Later Heidegger and Theology and The New Hermeneutic (op. cit.); Robert W. Funk, "Colloquium on Hermeneutics," (op. cit.); Carl E. Braaten, "How New is the New Hermeneutic?", Theology Today, XXII, No. 2, 218-235; and Robert T. Osborn, "A New Hermeneutic?", Interpretation, XX, No. 4 (October, 1966), 400-411.

The following essay represents an attempt to join the post-Barth, post-Bultmann phase of the discussion of preaching. However, the point of departure will be Barth and Bultmann themselves, rather than the tentative explorations of various versions of the post-Barth, post-Bultmann literature.

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[13] Ibid., p. 220.

[14] Funk, op. cit., p. 301 ff.

B. The nature of the problem faced in this essay.

As the theologians and Biblical scholars turn their attention to the preaching of the church it is incumbent upon the practical theologian to enter into vital dialogue with them concerning the nature and task of preaching. It is indefensible for the practical theologian and the practicing preacher to leave theological reflection on preaching to the disciplines of Biblical studies and dogmatics, supposing that such discussion is the proper province of "the scholars" while the regular task of writing and delivering sermons is quite something else. The man in the pulpit faces a concentrated challenge to re-examine what he is doing as he stands before a congregation in the context of corporate worship and proceeds to preach. There are, indeed, vital factors in the total conversation about preaching which must be added from the specific situation of the preacher working regularly at the task of preaching. There are also various accepted practices in preaching which need to be evaluated anew in light of the more sophisticated discussion of preaching found in the work of the theologians and Biblical scholars. Rudolf Bohren, writing as a practical theologian, poses the challenge to the discipline of practical theology in these words,

> It is remarkable how uncritically practical theology limps along after each and every theological model, usually contenting itself with an ecclectic attitude. If it is the duty of practical

> theology to think through the work, the practice of the church, then it will not only learn gladly from the other theological disciplines, it will also feel itself compelled to ask basic questions concerning the work of theology and its methods.[15]

It is the intent of this essay to accept the challenge of seeking to understand the nature of theological assertions about preaching and subsequently ask questions and suggest lines of approach from the standpoint of practical theology.

C. The methodology to be employed.

It is perhaps rather pretentious to attempt to enter into discussion with the theologians' discussion of preaching inasmuch as the scope of the discussion is so vast. Thus let me begin the process of delimitation by indicating the particular methodology to be employed in this work.

(1) The point of departure for the conversation concerning preaching will be the writings of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann. In one sense this essay is an attempt to be a partner in the post-Barth and post-Bultmann discussions. Rationale for this point of departure is given below. Naturally certain attention must be given to significant developments subsequent to Barth and Bultmann, but the primary partners in conversation will be limited to these two men.

(2) The focus of this essay is homiletical. By this I mean to establish the fact that the purpose is not aimed at extensive descriptive discussion of the overall theological method of Barth or

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[15] Rudolf Bohren, Preaching and Community (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965), p. 82.

Bultmann. Neither will it be the intention to offer general critiques of the two men. We shall be dependent upon various works which have attempted such description and critique. The complexity of the issues and the extent of the writings of the two men make it practically inappropriate to attempt such broad exposition and critique. However, from a deliberate homiletical interest I shall attempt to study and respond to the two men under consideration. The first task is the attempt to understand basic issues posed by the two men, and that we shall attempt. The next step is definite response and criticism. This too we shall undertake. But the homiletical bias of this study shall serve as a principle of delimitation. My basic concern revolves around the attempt to understand the task of preaching in light of the significant assertions forwarded by Barth and Bultmann.

(3) The procedure to be followed in the ensuing discussion will begin with chapters devoted to the attempt to understand why Barth and Bultmann focus such extensive attention on the event of preaching coupled with a summary statement of the basic theological definition of preaching found in each. This will be followed by a response in terms of the validity of their claims coupled with certain criticisms of their approaches. Subsequently I shall explore the nature of "homiletical behaviour" proceeding from the theological definitions of preaching suggested by the two men. This is where we turn to the deliberate concern of practical theology and shall seek to formulate the issue in terms of the ethical responsibility of the preacher.

D. The rationale for the chosen delimitation.

A word is in order as to why Barth and Bultmann are chosen as conversation partners in the ensuing discussion. Admittedly the course of contemporary theology and the particular theological discussions of preaching have moved beyond Barth and Bultmann, a point which may raise the question of the legitimacy a study of these two men instead of later writers in the field. In answer to the question, "Why Barth and Bultmann?" the following rationale is forwarded.

(1) Barth and Bultmann stand as two preeminent theologians of the twentieth century. This is a fact which needs not so much documentation as simple recognition. Contemporary conversations may well move beyond the work of these two men but surely the student of theology today must recognize the way in which the contours of a significant majority of twentieth century theology and Biblical study have been defined by the issues brought to expression in Barth and Bultmann.

Barth's Romans stands as a watershed in contemporary theology. With the publication of this commentary twentieth century theology turned a corner. His subsequent works have continued to distinguish him as a preeminent figure in the life of the Christian Church today. One critic suggests,

> Barth's theology represents a Coperican turn in the history of human thought about God, the universe, and man, accomplishing such a complete change of the theological scene that it is not too much to say that a new theological epoch has been initiated by it.[16]

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[16] Herbert Hartwell, The Theology of Karl Barth (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), p. 179.

Another comments, ". . . it is acknowledged by many in all quarters that Barth must be accorded an honoured position among the greatest theologians of the Church--Athanasius, Anselm, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin."[17] Such accolades may represent a particular bias, but even among those less enthusiastic about Barth's theology there is a consensus of opinion concerning his unchallenged stature in contemporary theology.

The case for Bultmann's significance for contemporary theology is also fairly obvious. John Cobb, in acknowledging the different paths followed by those influenced by Bultmann, writes, ". . . it is . . . not surprising that Bultmann's brilliance and daring theological proposals have become the focus for much of the most creative theological work of our time."[18] And from another quarter one reads, "Bultmann has the distinction of having identified and shaped most of the questions with which contemporary scholars must wrestle."[19] Such quotes from responsible critics could be duplicated many times over.

The point is simply that one basic reason for turning to Barth and Bultmann is the manifest significance of the two men for contemporary theology. Responsible preaching today neglects the thought of these two men at its own peril.

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[17] T. F. Torrance, Karl Barth, An Introduction in His Early Theology, 1910-1931 (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 15.

[18] John Cobb, Living Options in Protestant Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 258.

[19] Charles Kegley, ed., The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. xi.

(2) However, let it be quickly acknowledged that it is not just the preeminence in theology that turns the practical theologian's head. The primary fact demanding the preacher's attention resides in the way in which these two theologians of substance turn concentrated attention to the task of preaching. Indication of this has already been given. It needs distinct underlining as one basic rationale for the present study. Preaching is brought into a position of central importance in the work of both Barth and Bultmann. Bold assertions are made concerning what happens in the event of preaching. The vital issues of the sermon are brought into sharp focus. Questions of the church's interpretation of the Bible and her articulation of theology repeatedly turn on the event of proclamation. Stephen Neill in discussing theological developments in the years 1939-1964 makes pointed reference to the concern of both Barth and Bultmann for preaching. He comments,

> On the dust cover of the first edition of Barth's _Romerbrief_ is printed the remark of a pastor, who after reading the commentary remarked, "_Jetz kann ich predigen_." (Now I can preach!) This was the experience of countless ministers in the period of chaos after the first World War.[20]

And concerning Bultmann he writes,

> Bultmann's original essay gave evidence of a deep pastoral concern: how does one preach today to modern man, to whom theological concepts are unknown and our ancient myths meaningless.[21]

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[20] Stephen Neill, "Theology 1939-1964," _Expository Times_, LXXVI, No. 4 (October, 1964), 22.

[21] _Ibid._, p. 21

In the theologizing of these two men a new spotlight is turned on the event of preaching.

Here let us refer to the testimony of a few voices from various contexts echoing the significance of Barth and Bultmann for preaching. Frederick Herzog marks Barth's early concern with preaching in these words:

> The well-known situation of the pastor working at two desks in his study, the historical-critical and the practical, was deplored by many, but Barth made a constructive effort to make one desk out of the two. Herein we find the strongest impetus which led Karl Barth to put his hand to the plow of theology in an unusually determined way.[22]

Paul Van Buren moves to a similar point in commenting on a series of Barth's essays in these words:

> Barth . . . is a theologian's theologian. His Church Dogmatics is of course a gold mine for theologians, a vertible encyclopedia of theological reflection from all ages, skillfully and profoundly expounded by an able man. But primarily, Barth stands as a theologian in the service of preaching. Preaching, as he conceives it, is an activity which takes place between the biblical texts and their faithful hearer.[23]

And the Frenchman, Georges Casalis, points to the renewal of preaching stemming from Barth's theology, commenting,

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[22] Frederick Herzog, "Theologian of the Word of God," Theology Today, XIII, No. 3 (October, 1956), 316.

[23] Paul Van Buren, in "Translator's Introduction," Karl Barth, God Here and Now (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. xiv.

> Theology is important only as it restores the joyful note of genuine preaching to the church and the preacher. It is only by the content of the sermons it inspires that the real worth of a theology can be measured. It is by this basic test that Barth's work can and must be judged. Its most important result, which alone has real significance, is beyond any doubt the renewal of preaching that it has fostered throughout the world, from Germany to Japan, wherever dialectical theology has produced this new emphasis on the gospel that is Karl Barth's joy and love.[24]

Comments of a similar nature could be elicited from different quarters, and the combined result of the chorus of testimony would point, as these statements do, to the concerted impact of Barth's theology on preaching.

In the same way it is not difficult to hear different voices expressing deep appreciation for Bultmann's central concern for preaching. David Cairns, devoting a book to the specific challenge of Bultmann to the preacher, acknowledges that Bultmann

> . . . is not only an eminent New Testament scholar, he is also a preacher of the gospel who takes his task with utmost seriousness. And as a preacher, he has one paramount gift, the gift of sensitiveness to what his hearers may be thinking. As you read his sermons, you can hear the question which is in the back of his mind: 'Supposing there is a man who has just come into this church; a man with little or no religious background; how much of all this that I am saying will have any meaning to him? As he listens to me, is he all the while saying to himself, 'Try as I may, I simply cannot believe that?' Or is he quite unable to attach meaning to my words? Do they seem to him pure myth, or even worse, mumbo jumbo?[25]

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[24] Georges Casalis, Portrait of Karl Barth (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963), pp. 93-94.

[25] David Cairns, A Gospel Without Myth? (London: SCM Press, 1960), p. 15.

Cairns goes on to assert that it is just this preaching situation which occupies the focus of much of Bultmann's vision. Jules Moreau suggests that Bultmann's most receptive hearers have been preachers, precisely because Bultmann seems to concentrate consistently on the difficulty they face in preaching today.[26] Martin Stallman, in his article entitled "Contemporary Interpretation of the Gospels as a Challenge to Preaching and Religious Education," traces the way in which Bultmann's work as a New Testament scholar challenges preaching ". . . to secure from that proclamation which the Gospels expressly claim to be, an understanding of its own task and with this a criterion for its own integrity."[27] In ways both quite practical and theological Bultmann continually raises central questions for the man who stands in the pulpit.

The citation of these various voices is offered as recognized testimony to the fact that in turning to Barth and Bultmann we are confronted with two men who discuss the preacher's task not incidentally in theology, but as integral to legitimate theologizing. This fact certainly serves to turn the homiletician's head and demands careful consideration.

(3) One further reason for choosing Barth and Bultmann as conversation partners rests in the fact that their positions are clearly

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[26] Jules Moreau, Language and Religious Language (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), p. 164.

[27] Kegley, ed., op. cit., p. 249.

defined. Barth, of course, is dead. Bultmann's writings are now limited and so far as I can discern are primarily concerned with response to his critics. One further consideration concerning Bultmann is the fact that he has maintained a relatively consistent position over the years. It will be noted by the reader that an attempt is made to trace something of the progress of Barth's developing thought while no such attempt is made in discussing Bultmann. It is the conclusion of the writer that Bultmann's position has been substantively the same from his earliest writings to his later essays. Thus we have the advantage of studying persons whose basic positions are defined, a situation quite different from what one finds in much of the post-Barth and post-Bultmann corpus of material.

These then represent the primary reasons for the make-up of this work. There are, of course, various autobiographical reasons rooted in the writer's own indebtedness to the two men, but these personal reasons are closely related to the primary rationale given.

(4) One further matter perhaps deserves attention in stating the rationale of this study, namely, "Why try to converse with both Barth and Bultmann?" The issues are frequently put in terms of Barth or Bultmann, the two being characterized as occupying opposite poles of the theological spectrum. There are, to be sure, those who seek to occupy a mediating position incorporating the works of both men. Henrich Ott represents a conspicuous example of the mediating effort.[28]

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[28] Cf. Heinrich Ott, Theology and Preaching, op. cit.

But Ott is accused of forsaking Barth's basic position in favor of the law/gospel mold and critics seem to suggest that there can be no mediating position.[29] Some even speak of a Barth-Bultmann impasse.[30] Is it reasonable, then, for the practical theologian to attempt to encompass the works of both men in the scope of a single work?

In response to such a question the first word to be said is a word of caution concerning the practice of typing theologians with convenient labels. Helmut Gollwitzer, acknowledging his indebtedness to both Barth and Bultmann, warns against the use of the conservative-liberal labels and suggests that ". . . the pattern of thought hidden behind these labels would best be avoided altogether."[31] It is quite true that convenient characterizations often obscure the real issues. With specific reference to Barth and Bultmann, Claude Welch has what seems to me to be a quite valid point in his criticism of the schematization of the theological 'right' and 'left' as employed by such men as Schubert Ogden, Paul Van Buren, and John Macquarrie. Welch points to certain essential weaknesses in this schema and adds,

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[29] Cf. the discussion of Ott in Carl Braaten, History and Hermeneutics (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), p. 140 ff.

[30] James Barr, Old and New in Interpretation, op. cit., sees his efforts as an attempt to find a way through the alledged Barth-Bultmann impasse.

[31] Helmut Gollwitzer, The Existence of God as Confessed by Faith (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), p. 11.

> Now I am not attempting to say that the schematism or 'right' and 'left' is meaningless, either in relation to the issue of demythologizing or to the theological scene in general - only that it is disastrous. Everyone knows what it means, and that is just the trouble. It is another way of saying 'conservative' versus 'liberal', or minimum versus maximum accommodation to the world. Now we all know more or less what those vague contrasts are supposed to indicate, and we recognize the presence of varieties of perspectives to which such terms have some relevance. But they are not illuminating! And they are usually misleading.[32]

These are words that invite careful attention.

I shall consequently not begin this study with an image of polarity between Barth and Bultmann. Such a polarity might well discourage study of both men in the same work. Rather it will be my effort to listen to each man on his own terms, and to the two together as they focus their theological efforts on the task of preaching. Certainly there will be no attempt to obscure the manifest differences, but neither can their common concerns be obscured. While the methodology of the two men may be quite disparate, there are at the same time quite interesting areas of common ground.

E. Introductory Statement of Thesis.

The basic thesis of this essay is that the discussion of preaching in contemporary theology as represented in the writings of Barth and Bultmann presents a distinct challenge to the preacher in two vital realms. On the one hand, the preacher is challenged to understand the nature of the event of preaching in terms of the dynamic of God's living Word to His people in the present situation. On the other hand, the preacher is challenged by the manifest theological affirmations concerning preaching to specific integrity in his homiletical practice. The first issue has to do with the formal definition of preaching, the theology of preaching. The second issue has to do with the concrete behaviour in the preparation and delivery of sermons, and thus the ethical dimensions of preaching.

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[32] Claude Welch, "On Theological Typology," Theology Today, XXII, No. 2 (July, 1965), 183.

What is being suggested by this thesis is that dogmatics and ethics are two parts of one circle. Dogmatics without ethics leads to scholasticism, and ethics without dogmatics leads to moralism. That is, if there are valid theological affirmations to be made about preaching, then it is necessary to pursue the meaning of such affirmations as they determine the shape of specific action in the pulpit. The discussion of the theology of preaching and homiletical practice are integrally interrelated.

Another way of stating the concern of this essay is to assert that the extensive theological discussion of preaching detached from the practical issues of immediate writing and delivery of sermons involves us in a rather high sounding but essentially sterile theological discussion. And likewise, the discussion of homiletical practice without careful consideration of the theological basis of preaching involves us in a hodge-podge of individualistic and idiosyncratic bias lacking both theological and ethical responsibility.

It will thus be the intent of this essay to join the discussion in dogmatics and Biblical study as it concerns the theology of preaching, and from the practical discipline to seek to explore the implications of this discussion as it concerns preaching as ethical action.

An explanation of certain presuppositions and terms is in order.

(1) First, it is the conviction of the writer that there is definite need for serious theological reflection on the nature of preaching, particularly in the American situation. Already we have referred to the practical denigration of preaching in the church in America. The argument is not that we have been entirely devoid of theological reflection on preaching, but simply that it has not been as extensive nor influential as is needed.

(2) Second, it is the conviction of the writer that the American homiletical tradition reflects an undue influence of the tradition of individualism. The sermon has too often been conceived as the private province of the preacher and he has been left to his own idiosyncrasy in fashioning the type of preaching he does. Certainly one would not argue for the elimination of the subjective and individual elements in preaching, but there is ample cause to call into question the behaviour of the preacher in terms of theological integrity and subsequently ethical integrity. That is, one can ask of a given sermon, "Is this an expression of obedient response to the previous hearing of the gospel and its explicit and implicit commission, or is this a display of the particular religious and oratorical genius (or

lack of it) of the individual preacher?" The issues involved in the preaching of a sermon incorporate questions both theological and ethical--theological, in relation to the understanding of what a preacher is doing, and ethical, in relation to how a preacher conducts himself in the pulpit. And on both scores the sermon as the private province of the individual preacher is called into question.

(3) Third, it is the conviction of the writer that confusion about the so-called 'freedom of the pulpit' which has marked the American situation in recent experience is closely related to the theological confusion about preaching which has marked the professional ministry. When the sermon is conceived as the private province of the individual preacher, an occasion to expound his own opinions religious and social on individually chosen topics, then it serves to breed on the part of congregations the idea that they have the right to 'pressure' the preacher into saying or not saying certain things. That is, if the preacher himself does not conduct himself as a man 'under orders' then it encourages the congregation to proceed to give him orders. The fact is that the pulpit is not 'free'. The pulpit is indeed 'bound', bound by a commission, bound to a task carefully defined theologically, bound by definite ethical responsibilities in any given sermon--ethical not simply in terms of what he says, but ethical in terms of how he behaves in his study and in the pulpit.

(4) Fourth, the term 'ethics' or 'ethical action' is used in this essay to refer to the question of responsible behaviour stemming from affirmation of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. Paul Lehmann, for

instance, defines Christian ethics in terms of the question, "What am I, as a believer in Jesus Christ and as a member of his church, to do?"[33] Without seeking to endorse all the implications of Lehmann's contextual ethics, it is the concern of this essay to examine the particular behaviour of the preacher in the pulpit in light of just such a question. As I understand the discipline of Christian ethics it seeks to explore the question of responsible human behaviour which is appropriate to belief in Jesus Christ. There are, of course, various ways of approaching the task of Christian ethics. An attempt will be made in the final chapter to define more precisely the position of this essay. It will not be my concern to enter into extensive debate with various ethicists in an effort to resolve the manifest conflicts present in the discipline of Christian ethics today. However, and this is the primary argument of this essay, it is my contention that the particular human behaviour of the preacher in his task of preaching should be emphatically included in the spectrum of ethical concerns as they pertain to the Christian community. It is quite common for ethical discussion to focus on such questions as race, war, sex, the family, justice, economics, and other questions of this order. However, it has not been the case that the ethicists have turned their attention to the question of good human behaviour consistent with faith in Jesus Christ as it pertains to the behaviour of the man in the pulpit. Ethical conversation has moved from theological affirmation to a wide variety of questions concerning the behaviour of the Christian, but the particular behaviour of the preacher in the pulpit has been conspicuously omitted from the agenda of ethical concerns. Yet, it remains that one of the most consistent acts of the Christian church in obedience to its understanding of the command of God has been the action of preaching. Certainly it is appropriate to seek to define theologically what happens in the preaching event. But with all the theological conversation about preaching seldom has the specific human behaviour of the preacher been examined as ethical action consistent with theological affirmation. The burden of my response to the discussion of preaching in Barth and Bultmann is that this omission needs correction. Preaching as responsible human behaviour based upon faith in Jesus Christ should be defined and examined as responsible ethical action.

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[33] Paul L. Lehmann, Ethics in a Christian Context (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 45.

In both Barth and Bultmann we are confronted with issues concerning the nature of preaching, the theology of preaching, and the responsibility of the preacher in preaching, the ethics of preaching.

CHAPTER II

THE FOCUS ON PREACHING IN BARTH

The intent of the next chapters will be to trace the focus on preaching found in Barth and Bultmann. It is germane to our discussion to seek to understand first, why each man places such pivotal importance on preaching, and secondly, what they conceive preaching to be.

The evidence for Barth's central concentration on preaching is present throughout his writings. In his earliest writings we find the distinct imprint of one who is vitally concerned with the specific task of the preaching. His early writings bear the indelible mark of his involvement as a pastor facing next Sunday's sermon. He asserts that his _Romans_ is an attempt to answer the question, "What is preaching? - not How _does_ one do it? but How _can_ one do it?"[34] The essay "The Need and Promise of Christian Preaching"[35] reflects the authentic note of one who knows what it is to face the "What now?" as standing in the pulpit he faces ". . . the Bible, full of mystery: and . . . his more or less numerous hearers, also full of mystery."[36]

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[34] Karl Barth, _The Word of God and the Word of Man_ (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), p. 103.

[35] _Ibid._, p. 97 ff.

[36] _Ibid._, p. 104.

Barth acknowledges that it is the specific standpoint of the preacher which he seeks to make the viewpoint of his theology.[37]

As Barth moves to the task of dogmatics, having moved from the pulpit to the professor's chair, he indicates that it is still preaching that occupies the focal point of his dogmatic endeavors. In a letter to Thurneysen he discusses his projected dogmatics, writing,

> Main viewpoints: (1-2) Dogmatics is the consideration of the Word of God as revelation, Holy Scripture,, and Christian preaching. The primary object is not biblical theology, not church doctrine, not faith, not religious consciousness, but Christian preaching that is actually preached, which on the one hand is to be recognized *as* the Word of God by reference to Scripture and revelation and on the other hand (this the purpose of exegesis) is to be defined critically *by* the Word of God. Thus the concept of dogmatics: exposition of the *principles* of Christian preaching based on revelation and Scripture.[38]

Although Barth's first beginning in dogmatics had to be revised and a new start taken, there is still in the *Church Dogmatics* strong reflection of the basic concern of dogmatics as stated in this letter.

In the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics* Barth asserts that dogmatics is projected on the basis of the language about God found in the Church, the most characteristic form of such language being proclamation.[39] It is made clear that Church proclamation is the material of dogmatics, and precisely not the reverse. That is, dogmatics does not give preaching the material for proclamation, but rather dogmatics proceeds on the basis of the language about God present in proclamation. Barth insists, ". . . it would be a fatal confusion to think of asserting . . . that dogmatics is the raw material of proclamation."[40] The particular word to be proclaimed arises from the event of the hearing of a specific text in a given situation, and dogmatics proceeds in the quest for the responsibility of such preaching. In this way preaching is set at the center of dogmatic concerns and through the many volumes that follow the point again and again comes back to the issue of church proclamation.

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[37] *Ibid.*, p. 104.

[38] James Smart, trans., *Revolutionary Theology in the Making* (Richmond: John Knox, 1964), p. 182.

Not only in dogmatics, but repeatedly in various other occasional studies and essays the central emphasis on preaching arises. For instance, in his chapter on Schleiermacher in the study of Protestant theology from Rosseau to Ritschl, Barth comments,

> We cannot be mindful enough of the fact that Schleiermacher was not one of those theologians who are in the habit, under some pretext or another, of dissociating themselves from the most difficult and decisive theological situation, that in which the theologian, without any security of any

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[39] Karl Barth, The Doctrine of the Word of God, (Prolegomena to Church Dogmatics, being Vol. I, Part I) (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), p. 1. (Subsequently the Church Dogmatics shall be indicated by the abbreviation C.D. with the appropriate volume.)

[40] C.D., I 1, p. 88

> kind, must prove himself solely as theologian. I refer to the situation of the man in the pulpit.[41]

Or again, in recent years, Barth affirms that "In conformity with its object, the fundamental form of theology is prayer and the sermon."[42] Citing such references could be continued for pages inasmuch as there are few contexts in Barth's various writings in which the discussion of preaching is not in the line of vision.

We begin, then, with the simple recognition that Church proclamation occupies Barth's attention throughout his writings. But the question which must be pursued is "Why?". What factors contribute to the pervasive concentration on preaching? The answer to this question is somewhat complex, while at the same time it can be stated that the basic rationale for the concern for preaching is related to the basic emphasis on revelation in Barth. However, before discussing revelation, as such, and preaching as correlate of revelation, it will be germane to mention several factors that helped to shape the particular emphasis on revelation and the related concentration on preaching.

A. We begin with the fact that one fundamental ingredient in Barth's theological development is his existential involvement with the problem of the sermon. Already we have referred to this. Here let it be deliberately underlined as a quite crucial element in Barth's subsequent theologizing. Thurneysen acknowledges the importance of the struggle in the pastorate as decisive for Barth's theology. Writing in the introduction of the collected letters of Barth and himself, Thurneysen says, ". . . Karl Barth as a country preacher took this office seriously and exercised it with a forcefulness and wholeness that was peculiar to him."[43] The weekly preparation of the sermon with its related rigorous study of the Bible leaves a definite imprint on the ensuing years of theological pursuits. Thurneysen adds,

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[41] Karl Barth, Protestant Thought: From Rosseau to Ritschl (New York: Harper & Bros., 1959), p. 310.

[42] Karl Barth, The Humanity of God (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960), p. 57.

> Both then and now this has been the source from which his whole theology has come. It has grown out of the work of preaching, and it serves the proclamation of the church . . . It is this concentration on Scripture and proclamation that leads him already in the Safenwil period into a penetrating dialogue with the theology of the time which all along the line, from right to left, has become a bit speculative as well as apologetic in its resistence to a contemporary thought that had "come of age." Out of this dialogue arose the theological new beginning that continues to be associated with the name of Karl Barth.[44]

Perhaps the best insight into the impact of the existential situation of the preacher on Barth's theology is reflected in the important essay, "The Need and Promise of Christian Preaching." The tenor of this essay is generally familiar but it is germane to rehearse here the specific nature of Barth's early homiletical focus. The essay is written in 1922, after the publication of the Romans commentary has awakened lively response. In seeking to explain the genesis and the genius of his theological undertakings Barth says,

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[43] Smart, op. cit., p. 12.

[44] Ibid., p. 13.

> . . . we can only assure any one who may happen to desire an understanding of it (his theology) that it did not come into being as a result of any desire of ours to form a school or to devise a system; it arose simply out of what we feel to be "the need and promise of Christian preaching."[45]

Acknowledgement is given to the fact that he began his ministry greatly under the influence of his teacher, Hermann, but the specific task of preaching began to reorient his basic understandings. He writes,

> Once in the ministry, I found myself growing away from these traditional habits of thought and being forced back at every point more and more upon the specific minister's problem, the sermon. I sought to find my way between the problem of human life on the one hand and the content of the Bible on the other . . . it simply came about that the familiar situation of the minister on Saturday at his desk and on Sunday in his pulpit crystalized in my case into a marginal note to all theology, which finally assumed the voluminous form of a complete commentary upon the Epistle to the Romans.[46]

Barth goes on to add that he grew impatient with the lack of understanding of the minister's problem, the sermon, evidenced in the theology of his time. Then he adds,

> Would it not pay, I asked myself further, to satisfy one's self how much light might be shed upon theology from this viewpoint? Would it not be for theology's own good if it attempted, as I have said, to be nothing more than this knowledge of the quest and questioning of the Christian preacher, full of need and full of promise?[47]

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[45] Karl Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, op. cit., pp. 99-100.

[46] Ibid., pp. 100-101.

[47] Ibid., p. 102.

From this perspective Barth affirms that he seeks to take his place among working pastors with a theology ". . . which consists simply in an understanding of and sympathy for the situation which every minister faces."[48]

Later in the same essay Barth's reading of the existential situation of preaching reveals how basic lines of his subsequent theology are being expressed. For instance, in writing of the "expectancy" that pervades the preaching situation, he writes,

> The event toward which this expectancy is directed from both sides (the expectancy of the people and the expectancy of the Bible) is Christian preaching. And the man who stands, perhaps not at the center, but certainly in the foremost and most exposed position, is the Christian preacher, the minister. As the minister of the people who come or do not come to church on Sunday, he must be the first to give them the answer; and as the minister of the Bible he must be the first to be prepared to submit to God's question by asking the question about God, without which God's answer cannot be given. If he answers the people's question but answers it as a man who has himself been questioned by God, then he speaks--the Word of God; and this is what the people seek in him and what God has commissioned him to speak.[49]

Here Barth reflects both his existential understanding of the event of preaching and his new reading of this event. The primary question is not man's question, but God's. The basic issue is not anthropological, but theological, and the crucial focus of the fundamental theological issue is that event in which the preacher seeks to answer God's question of man. When God's word to man is the issue, and not vice versa,

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[48] Ibid., p. 103

[49] Ibid., pp. 122-123.

Barth asks, ". . . what event in the world is more momentous and decisive than Christian preaching?"[50]

We mark, then, in the first place, that one of the decisive factors shaping Barth's theology is the influence of the existential involvement with the event of preaching. To be sure, there are various departures from the theological overtures of these early years, but the imprint of the preaching situation is quite definitely stamped on subsequent theological developments. Thurneysen affirms the importance of these early years in understanding Barth, writing,

> . . . the whole course of his life's achievement is mirrored already in the stations on the road through which he passed in that early period. There already, and still today, the question of right preaching is his primary concern. There, too, we see him at the task of a right understanding of Scripture, since preaching is intended to be nothing other than exposition of Holy Scripture. There, too, one hears the commission to so deliver the message of Christ and his kingdom that the man of today will be able to understand it and will be moved and transformed by it. There, too, is the concern for the living congregation that will know itself responsible for this man of today, a congregation therefore that does not content itself with cultivating and offering to men a variety of religious feelings, opinions, and words, but rather gathers itself solely round God's Word, the invisible and the visible, and lets it shine forth powerfully in preaching and living in word and deed. There, too, is the riddle of this modern man of today himself who is to be understood wholly afresh in the light of the Word of God and with whom we are to recognize our solidarity and brotherliness in the light of Christ.[51]

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[50] Ibid., p. 123.

[51] Smart, op. cit., pp. 23-24.

B. A second cluster of factors vital to an understanding of Barth's focus on preaching can be described as historical factors, or more specifically, influences from the history of dogma. That is, reflection on developments in the theological life of the church serves to shape basic emphases in Barth. One of the most prominent characteristics of Barth's theology is the lively conversation he has with theologians past and present, major and minor. The consciousness of the continuity of the Church's present with its past tradition is very keen in Barth's theology and at several crucial points one can discern how particular influences from the past shape present theological discussion. Here we shall underline some particular developments in the life of the Church which have special bearing on Barth's concentration on preaching.

1. The inheritance of the Reformation. Barth comes before us as one who evidences strong indebtedness to the Reformers. From this formative epoch he has received basic cues for the 'new beginning' in theology in the twentieth century. It is not that Barth is simply an expositor of Reformation positions, for indeed he criticizes the Reformers freely and plows new ground in reshaping Reformation doctrines, notably so, for instance, in his doctrine of election.[52] Paul Lehmann, commenting on Barth as a representative of 'neo-orthodox' theology, says that 'neo-orthodox' must be seen in the following positive sense:

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[52] Cf. especially Karl Barth, The Doctrine of Creation, C. D. II 2.

> Neo-orthodoxy is the theological movement in contemporary Protestantism which seeks to correct both liberalism and the orthodoxy against which liberalism rightly protested, by a return to and a contemporary re-interpretation of the fundamental and formative significance of the Bible in the theology of the sixteenth century Reformers, chiefly Luther and Calvin.[53]

As Barth seeks to make a new start in theology he attempts to return to the emphases of the Reformers along a path quite different from that found in liberalism.

It is not for us here to trace in detail the manifold ways in which the re-interpretation of the Reformers shapes Barth's theology. We can, however, underscore the fact that one basic influence from the Reformers is the sola scriptura principle. As he turned from the theology of his formal education to the practical task of the preacher it was to the Scripture that Barth was driven with particular force. Lehmann suggests that authentic orthodoxy, according to the Reformers, is ". . . the exposition of the theology of the Bible in such a way as to give critical and creative meaning to the contemporary situation and to the individual who can only live in that and in no other situation."[54] To just such a task Barth set himself. Sitting at the preacher's desk he was forced to come to grips with the meaning of this Word for the present situation. In this undertaking Barth discovered

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[53] Paul L. Lehmann, "The Changing Course of a Corrective Theology," Theology Today, XIII, No. 3 (October 1956), 336.

[54] Ibid., p. 337.

"the strange new world of the Bible."[55] The contours of the discoveries he made in this strange "new" world are quite decisive not only for Barth, but also for the so-called "rediscovery" of the Bible that has marked recent decades of Protestant theology.[56]

The fact to be noted, however, is that the companion of the Reformers' scripture principle is preaching, lively preaching of the Biblical Word. This Barth strongly emphasizes. In discussing the Reformation return to the Bible Barth goes on to say,

> It is worth while to stop here a moment to see what immeasurable consequences follow upon the Reformers' proclamation that the word of God expressed in Holy Scripture is the foundation and final aim of the Church. No one who has never bemoaned this act of the Reformers has a right to rejoice in it with Reformation joy; for by it -- so far as we and our congregations are concerned -- a door of conscience has bolted against the attempt to temporize with Reality.[57]

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[55] Cf. Barth's essay, "The Strange New World Within the Bible," The Word of God and the Word of Man, op cit., p. 28 ff.

[56] James Smart, in his The Interpretation of Scripture (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), gives a brief estimate of the effect of Barth's Romans on contemporary Biblical interpretation in these words, "It was like the explosion of a bomb, or better, like the introduction of a chemical substance that had the effect of separating the divergent elements that had been mingled together in New Testament scholarship." (p. 276) Also George Hendry gives a helpful assessment of the influence of Barth in the rediscovery of the Bible in the twentieth century in his essay, "The Rediscovery of the Bible," in F. W. Camfield, ed., Reformation Old and New (London: Lutterworth Press, 1947), p. 142 ff. Numerous other testimonies to the significance of Barth's writings in contemporary Biblical interpretation could be cited.

[57] Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, op. cit., p. 112.

The result of this Reformation emphasis means that

> . . . the Reformation wished to see something better substituted for the mass it abolished, and that it expected that that better thing would be--our preaching of the Word. The verbum visibile, the objectively clarified preaching of the Word, is the only sacrament left to us. The Reformers sternly took from us everything but the Bible.[58]

The effectual result of the Reformation is that ". . . the preaching of the Biblical word of God is laid upon us with the whole dead weight of a historical reality and cannot be shaken off."[59] From the Reformers Barth has derived the central position of proclamation of the Biblical Word as the heart of the Church's life and her theology.

It is especially interesting to note how the influence of the Reformers shapes the arguments in the first volumes of the Church Dogmatics. Here Barth expounds his epistemological presuppositions and sets preaching as central in the scheme by which contemporary man encounters the living Word of God. When Barth cites evidence for his position substantiation is given not so much from Scriptural exposition, but from the writings of the Reformers. Repeated reference is made to the habits of the Reformers as a telling argument for given positions. For instance, in the concluding portion of the section on "Language about God and Church Proclamation" where Barth argues for the centrality of proclamation there is a fine print note of some length in which he calls forth support from various Reformers, namely Luther, Melancton, and Calvin.[60] Or again, in the discussion of "The Word of God as Preached" Barth's basic point of departure is an interpretation of the Reformers. He outlines his thesis that proclamation is a form of the Word of God and cites as primary substantiation the fact that "This perfectly plain designation of the function of Church proclamation is in itself thoroughly familiar to the Reformers."[61] There follows four pages of quotes from the Reformers and early Reformation confessions. Or again, in the concluding discussion of the three-fold form of the Word of God, Barth ends the section on "The Unity of the Word of God" with the assertion,

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[58] Ibid., p. 114.

[59] Ibid., p. 115.

> The doctrine of the three forms of the Word of God in the sketch here attempted is not new. We have seen in detail how revelation, Scripture, and proclamation have from the beginning stamped themselves upon Christian thought as the special forms of the Word of God. Let us recall some further testimonies to the unity and coherence of these three forms.[62]

And the primary testimonies called upon are from the Reformers.

The pattern recurs repeatedly in the two parts of the first volume of the Church Dogmatics. Citing the phrase, "This is how the Reformers regarded . . . " this or that position is a persuasive citation for Barth.[63] The overall impression is that Barth's Prolegomena rests not so much on positions derived from Scriptural exposition, but rather from writings of the Reformers. So pervasive is the influence of the Reformation that ". . . Roman Catholic theologians have time and again stressed that in Barth can be seen the consistent development of the Reformation, and therefore they have thought via criticism of Barth, to launch a central assault on the Reformation."[64] And in this opinion Roman Catholic theologians have a valid point. To understand Barth one must certainly cope with the influence of the Reformation on his thought, Arnold Come, for instance, concludes that to understand Barth one must grasp the impact of Reformation thought, writing,

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[60] C.D. I 1, pp. 78-79.

[61] C.D. I 1, p. 107.

[62] C.D. I 1, p. 137.

[63] Cf., for instance, how the phrase is used in the argument in C.D. I 1, p. 75.

> Barth is a theologian of the Reformation. He was born and bred in Calvinism. And Luther dominates Vol. I of the Dogmatics. In summarizing the influences that led to the decisive edition of the commentary on Romans, Bouillard concludes, "By instinct, by tradition unconsciously received, the theology of Barth was more Reformed, more Calvinist, than he knew." And concerning the Dogmatics as a whole Bouillard comes to this judgment: "Let us take Barth's thought for what it is: its originality is irreducible. Its context is truly designated only by reference to the Reformers, from whom it received its basic elements with the desire to make them bear fruit in a consistent way, in the midst of a new mental universe."[65]

To limit the interpretation of Barth's thought to reference to the Reformers would be to miss vital factors in the total picture. But assuredly, to miss this characteristic of his thought would invite confusing misinterpretation.

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[64] G. C. Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), p. 12.

[65] Arnold Come, op. cit., p. 65.

For our purposes it is important to underline the inheritance of the Reformation for it is from this source that Barth receives crucial influence in the concentration on preaching.

2. The Forgetfulness of Orthodoxy. A second important factor in the development of Barth's theology is his reaction to post-Reformation Protestant orthodoxy. In various contexts Barth takes up the discussion with representatives of this position. Many times his comments are critical. Of special interest for our purposes is the recognition that one of the basic weaknesses of orthodoxy, according to Barth, is their forgetfulness of proclamation as a form of the Word of God. Orthodoxy strongly affirmed the Word of God as revelation, but there was an excessive attempt to stress the unity of the Word as revelation and the Word in Scripture. This unity often takes the form of insisting that the Bible is the Word of God. Barth recognizes the worthiness of the orthodox attempt to maintain the unity of the Word and the Bible, but he insists that the solidifying and hardening of this relationship represented a basic forgetfulness on the part of orthodoxy which had subsequent disastrous effects. Barth's main argument is that orthodoxy forgot the unity of the three forms of the Word of God, and in the excessive insistence on the Bible as the Word of God, evidenced in the doctrine of inspiration developed by orthodoxy, the validity of preaching as a present form of the Word was forgotten. The doctrine of inspiration sought to 'freeze' the relation between Scripture and revelation, and one result, according to Barth, was the fact that ". . . with theologians of this period real and essential knowledge

of proclamation, the third form of the Word of God, has apparently ceased."[66] Orthodox theology could talk about preaching as Word of God, but, Barth says, ". . . the real point of connection between revelation and Scripture in the present is increasingly for them something quite different from the act of Church proclamation: it is knowledge, faith, sanctification, holiness of the individual."[67] This meant that for orthodoxy the ". . . unity of revelation and Scripture . . . had to degenerate into the appearance of being, not so much a dealing by God with His Church, but rather a divine private institution for such- and such number of private individuals, for achieving which preaching and the sacraments were in that case still quite good enough as so-called media salutis."[68] Orthodoxy forgot that the correlate of revelation and Scripture is proclamation in the service of God as a third form of the Word of God. In this neglect of the integral relation of present proclamation to revelation and Scripture

> . . . the Church forgot no less than herself; she made herself, instead of a place for the service of God, by which as such men are helped, a place of very splendid service to man, in which God must figure exclusively as the most highly objective, most highly miraculous means, but still only as a means.[69]

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[66] C.D. I 1, p. 139.

[67] Ibid., p. 139

[68] Ibid., p. 138

[69] Ibid., pp. 139-140.

Thus a Church, rigidly orthodox, still talking about the objectivity of the Word of God, in essence, had become little more than a gathering point for the salvation of men. In this, the experience of man came more and more to the fore, and the real service of God came more and more to be forgotten. One fatal flaw in the process of deterioration was the forgetfulness that the Word of God as present reality in the life of the Church was expressed in proclamation.

Barth adds that once this development had taken place it was only a natural thing for Modernism to see that the service to man, the nurturing of religious experience, could be accomplished by a simpler and less miraculous way. Barth writes,

> Was it surprising, if the objectivity which orthodoxy continued to claim for revelation and Scripture and theoretically also for preaching and the sacraments, struck one bright spirit and thousands of bright spirits, yes, even thousands of pious hearts, more and more as a superfluous idol, the smashing of which was bound to appear to them a good work, well-pleasing to God?[70]

Barth sees that the great emphasis on religious experience and feeling in nineteenth century liberalism was actually bred in the ground of orthodoxy's forgetfulness of preaching as a form of the Word of God, an expression of revelation in the present situation. As the experience of salvation became the correlate of revelation in orthodoxy, the next step was a less supernatural exposition of religious feeling in nineteenth century Neo-Protestantism.

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[70] Ibid., p. 140

Barth thus sees the task for dogmatics as one of returning to the dynamic concept of preaching as a form of the Word of God, recovering the point which orthodoxy forgot and correcting the subsequent excursion of Neo-Protestantism into the murky waters of religious experience. He states the task to be accomplished in these words:

> The task set us of today, with all profound respect for the work achieved by orthodoxy, and with all understanding of the ultimate intentions of this service, must consist, in contrast thereto and by fresh adoption of Luther's thoughts, in taking proclamation in particular with seriousness as the Church's act, in and through which service should be rendered not to man but to God, in and through which God comes to express Himself; and then, starting from that point, we must understand once more, that and in what sense first the Bible, and first of all revelation, is really God's Word. It was at this point, before the inrush of the catastrophe of the 18th century, that forgetfulness set in. It is obviously at this point that fresh reflection must begin. Which implies that the direct object of present-day dogmatics must be just Church proclamation.[71]

In assessing what Barth has to say about preaching it is important to hold in mind the particular dimensions of his reaction to orthodoxy.

3. Neo-Protestantism's Waywardness. If it can be argued that Barth set out to correct the forgetfulness of 18th century Protestant orthodoxy, it can be added that he deliberately set out to reverse the direction of 19th century Neo-Protestantism. If orthodoxy was forgetful, Neo-Protestantism had even more taken a wayward path and needed to be turned around 180 degrees in direction. It is one of the cliches of interpretation of Barth that he must be understood in his attempted

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[71] Ibid., p. 140.

complete reversal of the trends established in the 19th century, primarily in the work of Schleiermacher. In an interesting letter to Thurneysen Barth finds occasion to question Providence and the nature of Protestantism as he reflects on what happened in 19th century theology. He writes, "Things go no better with Schleiermacher but continually worse. The fact that it should be so with the chief figure of the nineteenth century is a serious problem for me (a) with regard to faith in divine Providence, (b) with regard to the truth and mission of Protestantism."[72] In repeated contexts throughout his writings Barth takes up his argument with what he considers to be the waywardness of Neo-Protestantism.[73]

Wingren alleges that Barth is so consumed with the question of Neo-Protestantism that in fact he allows that theology to dominate his thinking, and consequently does not adequately correct the waywardness that concerns him. Wingren writes, "At the very start he has simply turned liberal theology from 'man' to 'God', but he has not been able to break up the structure of the problem."[74] Still others contend that Barth has given a one-sided interpretation of Schleiermacher that has dominated the theological landscape of the twentieth century, and one of the needed tasks of theology today is a fresh and non-Barthian reading of Schleiermacher.[75] It is not for us to enter this debate, but it is noteworthy that one of the focal points of Barth's theology is his reaction to the alleged man-centered approach of 19th century theology.

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[72] Smart, op. cit., p. 175.

[73] It is interesting to mark in passing that one of Barth's major criticisms of Bultmann rests in the fact that in Bultmann he sees the recurrence of the basic mistakes of 19th century Neo-Protestantism. Cf. especially Barth's discussion of Bultmann, C.D. III 2, p. 441 ff., and Bartsh, Hans-Werner, Kerygma and Myth (London: SPCK, 1962), Volume II, p. 83 ff.

[74] Gustaf Wingren, Theology in Conflict, op. cit., p. 25.

For our purposes perhaps the best place to look for a synoptic view of Barth's reaction to the theology of the 19th century is his shorter essay, "Evangelical Theology in the 19th Century."[76] In this essay, Barth acknowledges the fact that the focal point of his reaction is located in the occasion in 1914 where ninety-three German intellectuals expressed public support of the war policy of Wilhelm II. Barth writes,

> Among these intellectuals I discovered to my horror almost all of my theological teachers whom I had greatly venerated. In despair over what this indicated about the signs of the times I suddenly realized that I could not any longer follow

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[75] Cf. especially Richard R. Niebuhr, Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), p. 11. Niebuhr marks the dominance of Barth's interpretation of the history of theology, and especially his interpretation of Schleiermacher. He then adds, "I suspect the time to be not far away, when the Barthian reading of the history of Christian thought will be corrected in a fashion comparable to that in which the last generation veered away from the theological presuppositions of Adolph von Harnack's history of dogma." p. 11.

[76] Karl Barth, The Humanity of God, op. cit., p. 11 ff.

> either their ethics and dogmatics or their understanding of the Bible and history. For me, at least, the 19th century theology no longer held any future.[77]

The shock of a particular political development contributed to Barth's asking radical theological questions.

Barth praises the openness of 19th century theologians to the world. But while this openness is to be commended, it is to be radically challenged in the way in which it let the environment of the world fatally affect the work of theology. He writes, "Theology, however, went overboard--and this was its weakness--insofar as confrontation with the contemporary age was its decisive and primary concern."[78] Four basic weaknesses are cited as a result of the openness to the world. (1) The stimulation for thought and discussion that came from the world meant that there was hardly time or love or zeal for the task to be accomplished within the household of theology itself. (2) Normative character was ascribed to the ideas of the environment of the world. (3) There was a failure to accept the absolute positive tasks of theology in and for the Church, over aginst the secondary tasks of relating to various philosophies of the time. (4) There was missing certain carefree and joyful confidence in the self-validation of the basic concerns of theology. There was no confrontation of the world from the standpoint of theological research carried out for its own sake. Barth concludes, "It did not enter their minds that respectable dogmatics could be good apologetics."[79] The fundamental problem was that man was set at the center of things in such a pervasive way as to cause a basic perversion of theology. In another context Barth comments,

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[77] *Ibid.*, p. 14. (It would make an interesting project to pursue the relation of Barth's theology and his politics. It is quite apparent at several points that political/social events are decisive in the shaping of Barth's theology and his theological affinities.)

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

> I cannot consider Schleiermacher a good teacher in the realm of theology because, so far as I can see, he is disastrously dim-sighted in regard to the fact that man as man is not only in need but beyond all hope of saving himself; that the whole of so-called religion, and not least the Christian religion, shares in this need; and that one can not speak of God simply by speaking of man in a loud voice.[80]

Basically Barth feels that "Theology was still being penalized for accepting the Renaissance discovery that man was the measure of all things, including Christian things."[81]

The overall effect of the trends of 19th century theology, as Barth understands it, meant that in its concentration on man there was a blurring of the vision of God who in His sovereignty confronts man; the Gospel was changed into a statement, a religion, about Christian self-awareness; and there was a fatal blurring of the horizontal vision of man's relation to the world in that the Christian was condemned to uncritical and irresponsible subservience to the patterns, forces, and movements of human history and civilization.

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[79] Ibid., p. 20.

[80] Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, op. cit., pp. 195-196.

[81] Barth, The Humanity of God, op. cit., p. 26.

Concerning preaching in this context, Barth can readily acknowledge that preaching was not neglected. He recognizes, for instance, that Schleiermacher actively sought the exposed position of the man in the pulpit. He writes "Schleiermacher saw the Kirchen-regiment (Church polity), for which theology provides the premise, as consisting essentially in the office of the preacher."[82] In a pattern equalling that of Luther and Calvin, Schleiermacher sought his place in the pulpit. But the fatal element in the picture was Schleiermacher's idea of preaching, namely, ". . . that the decisive factor is a 'self-imparting' of the preacher."[83] Preaching became self-exposition, and was consequently lost in the subjectivity of its own experiential limits. Concerning Schleiermacher's program of preaching as self-exposition, Barth writes,

> . . . there the phenomenon of Church proclamation is finally understood from and in itself, that is, from and in its connection with very different types of human proclamation, and its relation to man as historical being in general. And it is always criticised and rectified from the standpoint of its own imminent laws.[84]

Barth sets out to correct the waywardness of Neo-Protestantism, and while one must guard against over-simplification, it can nevertheless be asserted that in repeated contexts the positive concerns of

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[82] Barth, Protestant Thought from Rosseau to Ritschl, op. cit., p. 311.

[83] Ibid., p. 311.

[84] C.D. I 2, p. 799.

Barth's theology can best be understood in contrast to his reading of 19th century theology. Over against the man-centered approach of the 19th century, Barth enters a radical protest, rooted in Kierkegaard's infinite qualitative difference between God and man, that God is God, and confronts man as sovereign God. Over against Neo-Protestantism's fascination with religious experience, Barth argues that the proper line is found when we see man as serving God, and not vice versa. He suggests that Schleiermacher never possessed ". . . a clear and direct apprehension of the truth that man is made to serve God and not God to serve man."[85] Over against an unwarranted submission to existing world-views and a conception of theology primarily as apologetics, Barth argues for the positive task of dogmatics as the thinking of faith on its own ground, namely Jesus Christ. He asks 19th century theology, "what if the only relevant way of speaking of Christianity was from within?"[86] Over against the concentration of thought on man's salvation, on the beneficia Christi, Barth affirms an interest in Christ for Himself, in God as sovereign Lord, God extra nos. And over against a concept of preaching as self-exposition, Barth asserts that preaching is rooted in the Word of God, and indeed becomes a form, not of man's expressive piety, but of the Word of God to man. The fact that preaching stands under the promise of the Word of God means that ". . . by reason of this promise, Church proclamation is to be classed with Jesus Christ as the external divine Word and with the prophetic and apostolic witness to Him, and that therefore our phenomenon stands in unprecedentedly close relation to the fact that God has spoken, speaks, and will speak."[87] The crucial question for preaching is whether it will or will not ". . . serve the Word of God, whether it will or will not accept or deny this irruptive identity (with the Word), whether it will submit or not to the law which this irruption involves."[88]

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[85] Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, op. cit., p. 196.

[86] Barth, The Humanity of God, op. cit., p. 31.

It is not within the scope of this study to pursue in detail the various patterns of Barth's attempt to correct the waywardness of 19th century theology. However, it is germane to an understanding of what he has to say about preaching to keep in mind the polemic against Neo-Protestantism.

One comment on the above discussion must be added. While Barth in the context of the early part of the 20th century felt it necessary to make his protest known in no uncertain terms, there is a modification at certain points in Barth's later years. For instance, in recent years he has written, "There is certainly a place for legitimate Christian thinking starting from below and moving up, from man who is taken hold of by God to God who takes hold of man.[89] This is conceded so long as such a method does not claim exclusive and absolute status. Barth's essay, "The Humanity of God,"[90] records his willingness to moderate the extreme polemical character of his early protests.

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[87] C.D. I 2, p. 799.

[88] Ibid., p. 799.

[89] Barth, The Humanity of God, op. cit., p. 24.

Suffice it to say, however, that the shape of the reaction to the waywardness of 19th century theology was a determining factor in Barth's emphasis on revelation, and upon revelation defined in terms of the three-fold form of the Word of God--revealed, written and preached.

4. The rejection of natural theology. Closely aligned with Barth's reaction to 19th century theology, indeed a vital part of that reaction, is his rejection of natural theology as a valid ground for knowing God. The possibility of talking about God by talking about man in a loud voice runs directly contrary to the fundamental basis of the Christian faith, according to Barth. The only valid means of talk about God is on the basis of God's own revelation of Himself and it is precisely this that has occurred in Jesus Christ.

To trace Barth's various arguments against natural theology would lead us far afield. The notable battle with natural theology finds expression in his debate with Brunner,[91] in his Gifford lectures,[92] and in many contexts throughout the Church Dogmatics.[93] The important point to mark is the fact that Barth insists that the only valid ground for talk about God is the event of God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ. Theology as a whole, and preaching in particular, moves from this vital center, and not from any natural perception of man as he looks to himself or to the world around him.

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[90] Ibid., p. 37 ff.

[91] Karl Barth, Natural Theology (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1946)

[92] Karl Barth, The Knowledge of God and the Service of God According to the Teaching of the Reformation (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938)

[93] Cf. C.D. I 1, pp. 147 ff, 219, 448, 540; C.D. I 2, pp. 123, 263 ff.; C.D. II 1, p. 170 ff. et al.

The point at issue became especially sharp for Barth in the struggle of the German Church vis a vis Hitler. In Hitler heralded as "God-sent" Barth saw an especially vicious manifestation of a new form of natural theology. Barth writes of this era,

> The question became a burning one at the moment when the Evangelical Church of Germany was unambiguously and consistently confronted by a definite and new form of natural theology, namely, by the demand to recognize in the political events of the year 1933, and especially in the form of the God-sent Adolf Hitler, a source of specific new revelation of God, which, demanding obedience and trust, took its place beside the revelation attested in Holy Scripture, claiming that it should be acknowledged by Christian proclamation and theology as equally binding and obligatory.[94]

Out of the struggle with this threat there arose the Barmen Declaration which Barth says is ". . . the first confessional document in which the Evangelical Church has tackled the problem of natural theology."[95] In seeing various pulpits in the German Church and the subsequent development of the German Christian movement held captive to the 'new form of natural theology' Barth had sharpened for him the lines of battle with natural theology, insisting all along that theology, and especially the Church's preaching, cannot trifle with the idea of speaking its voice except on the basis of the revelation of God's free grace in Jesus Christ.

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[94] C.D. II 1, p. 173.

[95] C.D. II 1, p. 172.

One pertinent question confronting preaching is "On what basis do you make the assertion of your sermon?" And here, the answer from Barth is clear--solely on the basis of the Word of God declared in Jesus Christ which now in preaching faithful to the Biblical witness becomes the present Word of God.

5. The impatience with historical criticism. One further factor contributing to the particular shape of Barth's thought resides in his impatience with historical criticism, and further with the whole question of history.

The classic expression of such impatience is manifest in the Preface to Barth's work on Romans. But earlier, in a 1916 letter to Thurneysen, the concern is quite apparent. He comments that he is ". . . frightfully indifferent . . . about purely historical questions. . . 'How history will enrich one', they say--I think of typical pupils of Wernle and have not at all the impression of any richness that is possessed by these otherwise quite venerable people."[96] In the Preface to Romans the indifference is perhaps qualified, but the impatience is clearly evident and is the breeding ground for a 'new' kind of commentary. Barth writes,

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[96] Smart, op. cit., p. 36.

> I have nothing whatever to say against historical criticism . . . My complaint is that recent commentators confine themselves to an interpretation of the text which seems to me to be no commentary at all, but merely the first step towards a commentary.[97]

He persists in recognizing the legitimacy of historical criticism, but charges that such study simply does not go far enough. Barth says, "When I examine their attempts at genuine understanding and interpretation, I am again and again surprised at how little they even claim for their work."[98] His argument is that the critical historian needs to be more critical. He insists,

> The interpretation of what is written requires more than a disjointed series of notes on words and phrases. The commentator must be possessed of a wider intelligence than that which moves within the boundaries of his own natural appreciation. True apprehension can be achieved only by a strict determination to face . . . the tension displayed more or less clearly in the ideas written in the text. Criticism . . . applied to historical documents means for me the measuring of words and phrases by the standard of that about which the documents are speaking--unless the whole be nonsense.[99]

The documents are to be interpreted, he says, in terms of the particular questions to which the text addresses itself, and not in terms of other questions. "Everything in the text ought to be interpreted only in the light of what can be said, and therefore in the light of what is said."[100] Historical questions should fade into the background in order that the interpreter comes to grips with what is really there. "The Word ought to be exposed in the words," Barth argues.[101] The interpreter should become so involved in the matter at hand in the words that he almost forgets that he is not the author of these words, ". . . till I know the author so well that I allow him to speak in my name and am even able to speak in his name myself."[102] Barth recognizes dangers involved in this venture, but he insists that real interpretation cannot limit itself to the pursuit of the historical question. The interpreter must push on to actual encounter with the message, the Word, of the text.

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[97] Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans (London, Oxford, 1933), p. 6.

[98] Ibid., p. 7.

[99] Ibid., p. 8.

It is significant for our purposes to note that Barth grounds this insistence in the task which faces the man in the pulpit. He writes, in a word of challenge to the critical scholars,

> Do they not see that their student's future in the Church presents a problem which lies at the heart of the whole matter, and which cannot be dismissed as though it were merely a matter of 'Pastoral Theology'? I myself know what it means year in and year out to mount the steps of the pulpit, conscious of the responsibility to understand and interpret, and longing to fulfil it and yet, utterly incapable because at the University I had never been brought beyond that well-known 'Awe in the presence of

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[100] Ibid., p. 8.

[101] Ibid., p. 8.

[102] Ibid., p. 8.

> History' which means in the end no more than that all hope of engaging in the dignity of understanding and interpretation has been surrendered.[103]

It was the preaching situation that compelled Barth as a pastor to move beyond the products of historical critical study in pursuit of a more precise and more realistic understanding and interpretation. The matter at hand in the Biblical word was the relation between a God who is sovereign God and man. The issue in interpretation is not primarily an historical question, but rather a theological one, namely the Word of God which confronts man in the witness of the Word of God written.

Let it be quickly acknowledged that a pandora's box of vital questions has been opened by Barth's suggestions. He may be indifferent to or impatient with historical questions, but the matter is not settled with his suggested approach to the text. There is the recurring question, "What did actually happen?" The question of history still agitates lively discussion. Barth's approach is widely criticized.[104] Hugh Anderson, is commenting on Barth's "Denigration of Historicism" acknowledges that

> The Barthian demotion of 'historical exegesis' and exaltation of 'theological exegesis' was bound to raise vehement protests from those enchanted with the long romance of historical critical study and discovery of the time and world of Jesus and the

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[103] Ibid., p. 9.

[104] Cf. for instance Van Austin Harvey, The Historian and the Believer (New York: MacMillan, 1966, p. 153), where Harvey traces contradictions and inadequacies in Barth's approach.

> primitive Church, and particularly from those quarters in which an unremitting struggle had been waged against narrow Biblicism and arid dogmatism.[105]

However, recognizing the continued questions, it is important for us to mark the fact that Barth's concern in interpreting the text is not to move behind the text to the question of history, but to move from the text to the question of present proclamation. Barth does not seek to dismiss the question of history in favor of present proclamation as though the historical question were unimportant. However, he does contend that in light of the church's unceasing commission to preach on the basis of the given Biblical texts, the basic issue is how does the Word in the words come to lively expression today as the living Word of God. The concern for preaching breeds a certain impatience with those who limit the interpretation of the text to questions of historical criticism.

The task before us now is to move to the more formal discussion of revelation and preaching as correlate of revelation. Understanding of the arguments forwarded by Barth involves some grasp of the previously discussed development of his thought. The inheritance of the Reformation, orthodoxy's forgetfulness, Neo-Protestantism's waywardness, the rejection of natural theology, and impatience with historical critical study all converge to give the particular shape to Barth's positive claims for revelation.

C. In seeking to understand Barth's recognized concentration on preaching we began with the basic assertion that this focus is integral to the central concentration on revelation. To grasp the basis for the extensive claims and concern for preaching one is involved with the basic presupposition that God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. Barth's Christocentrism is widely acknowledged, and though such a phrase may represent oversimplification of Barth's theology, it nevertheless serves as a convenient characterization. What we shall do in the ensuing discussion is begin with a brief acknowledgment of the concentration on revelation in Barth. This is the basic presupposition of his theology, and it will be germane to pursue some of the reasons why and the way in which Barth's discussion of revelation proceeds. Next we will explore ways in which the focus on revelation leads to a formal definition of the Word of God in its three-fold form. Then there will follow a longer section which seeks to expound the theological definition of preaching stemming from the various ingredients in Barth's theology.

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[105] Hugh Anderson, Jesus and Christian Origins (New York: Oxford, 1964), p. 24.

Already the basic contours of Barth's idea have appeared in our discussion. The Church in her proclamation, confession, and witness moves from the sole center of God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ. Everything is subordinated to the focal point of God's revelation which has as its presupposition the Word of God--God has spoken, speaks, and will speak.

Barth's commentary on Romans sounds the theme of revelation again and again. His thought is still under the hold of Kierkegaard's "infinite qualitative difference" and God and the world are consistently set over against one another at this stage of his writing. God is God and man is man, and in clear distinction from the blurring of this difference latent in 19th century theology, Barth maintains a radical distinction. However, the separateness of God and man is overcome in God's own decision to make Himself known in Jesus Christ. Barth writes,

> Jesus Christ is Lord. This is the gospel and the meaning of history. In this name two worlds meet and go apart, two planes intersect, and one known and the other unknown. . . . The name Jesus defines an historical occurrence and marks the point where the unknown world cuts the known world.[106]

The central note is struck! The pivotal theme of the whole of history has been sounded. God has made Himself known in Jesus Christ!

At the stage of his writing in Romans revelation has the punctual characteristics of an event, an act, which only impinges upon the circle of this world. Subsequently Barth develops the idea of revelation further in asserting that from the one point we can move on to positive talk of God in His own Being. His study of Anselm is decisive in subsequent development of the idea of revelation. Barth acknowledges that only a few commentators have realized the importance of his work on Anselm in its influence on him. He says, ". . . in this book on Anselm I am working with a vital key, if not the key, to an understanding of that whole process of thought that has impressed me more and more in my Church Dogmatics as the only one proper to theology."[107] That "key" is that the only knowledge with which theology works is the faith-knowledge which flows from faith in God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Barth gives indication of the significance of this study as the basis for the 'no' to natural theology and the consequent exclusive concentration on revelation in Jesus Christ, writing,

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[106] Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, op. cit., p. 29.

[107] Karl Barth, Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960), p. 11.

> . . . in these years I have had to rid myself of the last remnants of a philosophical, i.e., anthropological . . . foundation and exposition of Christian doctrine. The real document of this farewell is, in truth, not the much-read brochure Nein!, directed against Brunner in 1934, but rather the book about the evidence for God of Anselm of Canterbury which appeared in 1931. Among all my books I regard this as the one written with the greatest satisfaction.[108]

One joy of this study apparently resided in the emergence of a freedom to work theologically from the *sole* center of revelation in Jesus Christ.

Subsequent to the work on Anselm several changes developed in Barth's dogmatic endeavors as he moved from the *Christian Dogmatics* to the *Church Dogmatics*. Natural theology is ruled out since Christian understanding can only proceed according to Anselm's rule *credo ut intelligam*, I believe in order that I may understand. Barth writes, ". . . the abolition, brought about by revelation itself, of any other possibility of revelation . . . is the only legitimate fulfilment of the programme: *credo ut intelligam*."[109] With revelation as the basic presupposition for Christian knowledge Barth is led to abandon certain existential-phenomenological traits in the earlier Christian Dogmatics. Further, a more positive evaluation of reason results in a more positive venture in dogmatics and the whole of history receives greater significance since the Word of God ". . . does not remain transcendent over time, it does not merely meet it at a point, but it enters time; nay, it assumes time; nay, it creates time for itself."[110] In this context Barth adds a note of warning against some passages in his Romans where revelation is presented as permanently transcending time, merely bounding time and determining it from without.

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[108] Karl Barth, "How My Mind Has changed," *Christian Century*, September 20, 1939, p. 1132.

[109] C.D. I 2, p. 44.

Reflecting on the history of theology as discussed in the previous section on the development of Barth's theological pilgrimage, we can take a brief look at how all of this leads him to the concentration on revelation and the resulting elaborate claims for proclamation. One of Barth's basic questions is "How does man know God?" In his reflection on Neo-Protestantism he has reached an impasse. Man cannot know God through reflection upon himself or his world. But neither does 18th century orthodoxy offer a viable option. Not only had the 19th century raised inescapable questions about orthodoxy, but further Barth perceives a fundamental weakness in the structure of orthodox theology. While orthodoxy had rightly placed emphasis on God's revelation of Himself there were definite perversions involved. For one thing, the frozen relation between the Word of God and the Bible had led to a

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[110] C.D. I 2, p. 50.

'scholastic' characteristic that overemphasized faith as assent to right teaching. Still further, the structure of orthodoxy led to an unwarranted focus on man's salvation which tended to make God merely a means to a desired end for man. And still further, orthodoxy had short-circuited the reality of God's living Word to man in proclamation. Orthodoxy did not offer to Barth a live option. However, in the Reformers Barth sees the emphasis on revelation coupled with the affirmation that the living Word of God is present in the Church today through preaching of the Word. In the Reformers Barth finds the emphasis on Christ as a noetic reality opening the way to man's present knowledge of God on the basis of faith. The Church lives from the sole center of Jesus Christ as He is known in the witness of prophets and apostles in Holy Scripture, and the reality of God's Word in Jesus Christ becomes present to the Church in the Word of God proclaimed. It is along these lines that reflection on the history of theology led Barth to the *sola Christus*, *sola scriptura* principles of the Reformers and to the conviction that preaching is a present form of the Word of God.

Another way of understanding Barth's concentration on revelation and the consequent claims for preaching is to state the issues in terms of the epistemological question which so occupies Barth. His central question revolves around man's present knowledge of God. His basic answer is that man can know God only on the basis of God's making Himself known. Thus the concentration on revelation in Jesus Christ. But as a matter of fact we are not immediately present to the event of that occurrence in history, and if our basis of knowing is a past event in history than we are dependent upon reports of that event. This we have, not so much in terms of reports, but in terms of witnesses to revelation whose witness is present to us in Holy Scripture. The significance of the Bible is in its nature as attestation, pointing beyond itself to the event of revelation in Jesus Christ. Barth writes, "The Bible . . . is not itself and in itself God's past revelation, but by becoming God's Word it attests to past revelation and is God's past revelation in the form of attestation."[111] But even in acknowledging the Bible as attestation the problem of our present knowledge of God is not settled. The Bible is a document out of the past and though it enters dynamically into our present it is not enough simply to repeat the words of the Bible. Revelation cannot be identified in this way with the Bible, a failure Barth discerns in 18th century orthodoxy. However, in preaching on the basis of the witness of the Bible its message can be made present to us. Preaching is an event in our present situation and as it repeats and expresses in the contemporary setting the witness of the Biblical writers, it becomes a dynamic form of the Word of God, the basis of our knowing now. Through the word of preaching the revelation in Jesus Christ witnessed to in the Bible becomes the foundation of our present living knowledge of God. It must be added that preaching as a form of the Word of God is further rooted in the fact that Jesus Christ is risen and in His present prophetic office as Risen Lord bears witness to Himself through the Word of preaching.[112] The problem of our knowledge of God is met with the concentration on God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ, and the problem of our knowledge of God as a present dynamic event is met by the concentration on proclamation in the form of exposition of the Biblical witness as a form of the Word of God through which God bears witness to Himself.

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[111] C.D. I 1, p. 125.

[112] Cf. C.D. IV 3, parts 1 and 2, where Barth develops the doctrine of the Prophetic Office of Christ.

Barth sought to reverse the theological field by a 180 degree turn from the dominant thought of the 19th century. Man's knowledge of God is rooted not in looking at man, but in God and God's free choice to make Himself known. Gustaf Wingren contends that the epistemological question so dominates the horizon of Barth's thought that ". . . in Barth's theology man is the obvious center. The question about man's knowledge is the axis around which the whole subject matter moves."[113] And in this Wingren has a point. But the significant difference is the way in which the question is answered. There the focus changes. But it remains that the claims made by Barth for proclamation are integrally rooted in the epistemological problem of man's present knowledge of God.

We shall now turn to the task of seeking to see how the above line of reasoning is worked out dogmatically in Barth's formal discussion of the Doctrine of the Word of God.

Barth begins by asserting that dogmatics is the scientific test which the church puts to herself concerning the language about God which is peculiar to her.[114] However, one thing to be readily acknowledged is that language about God is quite impossible We are fallen men and cannot speak of God. But that is not the last word. God Himself makes language about Himself possible on the basis of His own revelation of Himself as the Word of God. Proclamation, the most characteristic form of language about God in the Church, rests on this presupposition and can consequently venture forth with the intention and claim to tell people the Word of God to be heard in faith. Barth writes, " . . . if human language claims to be proclamation that can only mean that it claims to serve the Word of God, to point to its having been previously spoken through God Himself."[115]

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[113] Wingren, Theology in Conflict, op. cit., p. 34.

[114] C.D. I 1, p. 1.

The process at work here is the recognition of the existential reality of language about God in the Church. Barth evidences here the basic existential concern for preaching mentioned earlier, and at least in this part of the Church Dogmatics seems to be intent on fashioning a Dogmatics that keeps a central eye on proclamation. However, the venture is not exclusively existential for he insists that the existential reality of preaching in the Church raises for us the question of the possibility of such language, and that, as indicated, pushes on to question of the God who makes Himself known as the Word of God in Jesus Christ.

It should be marked that Barth recognizes that there are various types of language about God in the Church that are not intended to be proclamation of the Word of God, i.e., man's language to God in prayer, instruction of youth, theology, and service. Such language presupposes proclamation.[116] Proclamation is characterized as moving forth with the definite ". . . claim, and in the atmosphere of the definite expectation, that it has to declare the Word of God."[117]

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[115] C.D. I 1, p. 57.

The formal definition of proclamation given by Barth is as follows:

> Proclamation is the human language in and through which God Himself speaks, like a king through a herald, which moreover is meant to be heard and apprehended in faith as the divine decision upon life and death, as the divine judgment and the divine acquittal, the eternal law and the eternal gospel both together.[118]

Here we meet not only the emphasis on the claim and expectation of proclamation but also the positive assertion that God Himself does speak through the language about God found in the Church. Though the discussion of the Prophetic Office of the Risen Christ is yet to be developed, it is germane to mark the fact that Barth later argues extensively that the Risen Lord is His own witness. For instance, he writes, ". . . Jesus Christ speaks for Himself, . . . He is His own authentic Witness,. . . of Himself He grounds and summons and creates knowledge of Himself and His life, making it actual and therefore possible."[119] The early discussion, however, is rooted not so much in careful exegetical conclusions (brief reference is made to I Thes. 2:13, 2 Cor. 2:17, and I Peter 4:11) nor in the theological assertions about the Prophetic Office of Christ. Rather, the decisive citation for the early assertions about God speaking through preaching is from the Helvetic Confession of 1662, "Praedication verbi Dei est verbum Dei."[120] Suffice it to say that in beginning with the existential phenomenon of language about God found in the Church, Barth moves to the reality of revelation which makes such language possible and the assertion that the God who has made Himself known makes Himself known today in the present language of proclamation.

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[116] It is interesting to note that when Barth writes about the the basic vocation of the Church as witness in Vol. IV 3 he lists preaching as one of six forms of witness through speech. There seems to be a more positive evaluation of other forms of language in the Church in this context. Cf. C.D. IV 3, part 2, p. 86 ff. The discussion in C.D. I 1 defines proclamation as preaching and sacrament.

[117] C.D. I 1, p. 56

[118] C.D. I 1, p. 57.

Because God is a God who reveals Himself proclamation lives in the atmosphere of expectancy. The divine self-Word does not cease to be itself because it is served by human language. Rather human language which has as its presupposition the Word of God goes forth in the definite expectation that God will indeed speak through the human service of proclamation.[121] The theme of expectation is prominent in Barth's discussion of preaching.[122] The event of preaching is a quite human event but because God is the one who reveals Himself as the Word, preaching moves in the definite expectancy that the same self-revealing God will make Himself known in this human service. Or to put it another way, if God is the one who reveals Himself then the expected correlate of that revelation is preaching which has as its presupposition the Word of God.

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[119] C.D. IV 3, p. 46.

[120] C.D. I 1, p. 56

[121] C.D. I 1, p. 57

[122] Cf. Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, op. cit., p. 104 ff. and Karl Barth, The Preaching of the Gospel (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), p. 19 ff.

Behind the theme of expectation as it relates to preaching is the basic promise of the Word of God. The Word of God is in the first place the commission of preaching, but it is equally the promise of preaching. What a man ". . . can utter as God's Word in the exercise of proclamation, cannot be the actual Word of God as such, but only the repetition of His promise, repetition of the promise, 'Lo I am with you always!'"[123] The utterance of this promise is met with real fulfilment and in such an event proclamation is the present Word of God. Barth carefully argues that there is nothing automatic about preaching as the Word of God. The fulfilment of the promise is an act of free grace. Barth writes,

> Proclamation must mean the repetition of the divine promise. On the basis of the Word which God has spoken to His Church, attention is drawn in His Church through men to the Word which God wishes to speak to His Church. The presence of God is consequently God's free, i.e., His unfathomably free act from time to time in which He acknowledges the attention drawn and thereby fulfils the promise in a twofold sense: by making its repetition, completed by man, a true one, and by keeping faith with the promise proclaimed by the real new coming of His Word.[124]

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[123] C.D. I 1, p. 64.

[124] C.D. I 1, pp. 74-75.

God's Word in proclamation is not based on a material connection, but is rather an event of Word and faith, promise and fulfilment, a living encounter in which God confronts men.

The point to be underlined here is that while Barth argues for proclamation as a form of the Word of God, he does not go so far as to make a direct identity between revelation and proclamation, as for instance one finds in Roman Catholic claims concerning transubstantiation as it relates to the sacrament of Holy Communion. Rather, on the basis of past revelation preaching and sacrament occur within the promise and expectation of future revelation. And quite crucial for all talk of proclamation as the Word of God is the prophetic work of the Risen Lord, as developed by Barth in volume IV 3 of the Church Dogmatics. There Barth writes, in discussing "Jesus is Victor,"

> The history now under consideration begins with the special truth that this fact which God has set among us is not a mute but an eloquent fact; that it is a fact which speaks for itself, which indicates and explains itself; that it has and uses the power adequately to proclaim and therefore to communicate itself in its truth, to impart itself in its reality . . . . Jesus Christ is His own Prophet, light is its own light and reconciliation its own revelation.[125]

The promise and expectation of proclamation as the Word of God in this context rests finally upon the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ as Lord of all.

As we turn to the explicit formulations concerning the three-fold of the Word of God it is necessary to preface our remarks with the acknowledgement of the later changes that take place in the structure of Barth's Church Dogmatics. Paul Lehmann suggests that "The Neo-orthodox movement in Protestant thought is . . . committed by its corrective character to a changing course."[126] And that subtle shifts of direction are present in Barth is widely recognized. Barth's articles appearing in The Christian Century over the decades document his own assessment of "How I have Changed My Mind."[127] It is important for our purposes to mark this inasmuch as the formal definition of the three-fold form of the Word of God appears in the earliest volumes of the Church Dogmatics. There is a move to the alleged Christomonism in subsequent volumes, but one would be hard pressed to argue that Barth significantly abandons the epistemological foundations set in the Prolegomena. It is true that formulations in terms of the three-fold form of the Word are not explicitly set forth as Barth discusses various subjects in the course of his extensive dogmatic explorations. But it is equally true that in different contexts there is a return, if only in an incidental way, to the basic foundations established. Various critics have spoken of the "New Barth," or even a "New 'New Barth'"[128] but it can be argued that the shifts of direction are implicit developments of earlier presuppositions. Thus while one may find some differences between the discussion of proclamation in the Prolegomena and that in Volume IV 3, for instance, it is questionable to suggest that the later represents some basic abandoning of the earlier position. Let us freely acknowledge the change of emphasis, the different perspectives, the expanded relationships, the enlargement of issues, but let us not pretend that there is a radical disjuncture between the earlier and later Barth. As we shall try to indicate, not all that Barth has to say about proclamation is contained in the discussion of the three-fold form of the Word, but certainly the essential and consistent foundations are laid here.

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[125] C.D. IV 3, p. 221.

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[126] Lehmann, "The Changing Course of a Corrective Theology," Theology Today, op. cit., p. 338.

[127] Three of these articles have been collected, along with certain biographical data, in the volume Karl Barth, How I Have Changed My Mind (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1966).

[128] Robert T. Osborn, "A New 'New Barth'?", Interpretation, XVIII, No. 1 (January 1964), 62 ff.

The chapter on the three-fold form of the Word of God has as its thesis the following proposition:

> The presupposition which makes proclamation to be proclamation and therewith the Church to be the Church, is the Word of God. It attests itself in Holy Scripture in the word of prophets and apostles, to whom it was originally and once for all uttered through God's revelation.[129]

This statement reflects the central emphasis on God's revelation of Himself as the Word of God, and integrally unites revelation with Scripture and proclamation.

The interesting thing to mark is that in the development of the discussion that follows the first point to be considered is not God's revelation in Jesus Christ, but rather "The Word of God as Preached."

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[129] C.D. I 1, p. 98.

There seems to be a definite rationale in beginning at this point. We do not know the Word of God revealed in its original form, but rather encounter that Word first of all in the preached Word. Dietrich Ritschl emphasizes the importance of this order in his discussion of preaching which takes its basic cues from Barth. Ritschl writes,

> We have seen that it is indeed the "revealed Word" which gives authority to the written Word, and that it is the written Word which gives authority to the proclaimed Word. This is the order: 3-2-1, the order of authority. But that is not the order in which we hear the Word. To exaggerate for clarification: we do not first dig in the sand and try to find archaeological and historical evidence, then go to the Bible to prove that the Bible is right, and then move to the Church in our generation to proclaim that since such and such happened, and since it was interpreted in the Bible in this way, it will also be true today. . . . We hear and understand in the order 1-2-3: proclaimed, written, revealed Word.[130]

The issue is not one of splitting hairs, and it is not simply a reflection of Barth's existential concern for preaching. Rather it is the issue of how faith arises. The Biblical witness infers that faith comes from hearing as we are confronted with the testimony of a brother whose witness makes alive and present for us the Word of the Bible in its character as witness to revelation. Ritschl suggests that to begin with the 3-2-1 order may well necessitate the search for historical validity before we can say anything about revelation. But it is precisely because we have responded in faith to the proclaimed Word that we are prompted to pursue the questions of the Bible and the history which stands behind it. Inasmuch as faith is the response to the preached Word it is fitting and proper that we begin at this point. This seems to be the logic behind Barth's order in his discussion.

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[130] Dietrich Ritschl, A Theology of Proclamation (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960), p. 43.

In the discussion of the Word of God as preached Barth sees four vital connections between the Word of God and proclamation. First, "The Word of God is the commission upon the givenness of which proclamation must rest."[131] Proclamation does not arise from any desire in man to say something on his own, but rests rather on a compulsion, a commission, on ". . . God's positive behest."[132] Here Barth sets his face against the subjectivism of Neo-Protestantism and asserts that proclamation proceeds not on the basis of "self-exposition," but on the basis of an ". . . indication by God Himself fundamentally transcending all human causation, and so devoid of all human basis, merely occurring as a fact and requiring to be acknowledged."[133] The focus is clearly turned away from subjective piety and likewise from the effort to correlate a Christian answer with a prior human question. Neither religious experience nor questions from the human side are the foundation of preaching, but solely the Word of God, God's own revelation of Himself which confronts us as commission for proclamation.

The second relation between the Word of God and proclamation is "The Word of God is the object which as such must be given to proclamation, in order that it may be real proclamation."[134] The issue addressed here is the objectivity of the Word of God. To be sure, the Word of God can become the object of human perception, but it does not arise as a product of human causation. The Word of preaching is not one of the preacher's own making. It does not arise from metaphysics, psychology, political ethics, personal experience, or even theology. If there is to be preaching at all it must proceed on the basis of that which God gives to be preached, the revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ. Barth writes,

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[131] C.D. I 1, p. 99.

[132] C.D. I 1, p. 100.

[133] C.D. I 1, p. 101.

> Real proclamation thus means God's Word preached, and God's Word preached means . . . man's language about God on the basis of God's self-objectification which is . . . real solely in the freedom of His grace, in virtue of which from time to time He wills to be the object of this language, and is so according to His own good pleasure.[135]

If the first relation between the Word of God and proclamation raises the question of the motivation of preaching, this second relation raises the question of the content of preaching. The given object which is likewise the subject of preaching is the Word of God.

The third relation between the Word of God and preaching is "The Word of God is the judgement in virtue of which proclamation can alone be real proclamation."[136] In this instance Barth seeks to answer the question of the criterion of the truth of preaching. He acknowledges that we must test preaching, and indeed establishes this as the raison d'etre of dogmatics. But the real judgement of preaching does not pass into our hands. Above all the criteria we may establish there is yet another, namely the Word of God. Even as we pursue the question of the responsibility of preaching, we do so in recognition of the fact that the God who makes Himself known is the sovereign and free God, that His unveiling of Himself is an act of free grace, and the event of the Word of God is under His judgement. The concern here seems to be aimed at any act of presumption whereby men sets himself up as the one who determines whether or not God is present as Word in proclamation. We must pursue rigorously the questions of responsible preaching, but it is not for us to pass final judgement on the reality of the event of preaching as the Word of God.

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[134] C.D. I 1, p. 101.

[135] C.D. I 1, pp. 102-103.

[136] D.C. I 1, p. 103.

Finally, Barth adds, ". . . the Word of God . . . is the event itself, in which proclamation becomes real proclamation."[137] Here, in the last circle of relationship, proclamation is acknowledged as the event in which God really speaks. Barth says,

> It is a miracle of revelation and faith . . . when proclamation to us is not a human volition and execution qualified in some way, but also and primarily and decisively God's own act, when for us man's language about God is not only man's language, but also and primarily God's own language.[138]

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[137] C.D. I 1, p. 104.

[138] C.D. I 1, p. 104.

Full recognition is given to the volition and execution of the man preaching. It is not necessary for this somehow to vanish. In this context Barth makes brief reference to a Christological analogy, affirming that as Christ became truly man, so real proclamation is an event on the level of other human events. But as Christ is not only true man, so there is more involved in preaching. There is in proclamation, thus described, a real divine volition and execution. The question as to how the two, the human and the divine, operate side by side, Barth says, is ". . . a highly irrelevant one."[139] The human element in the service of God can indeed be the realm where God does make Himself known. Where proclamation occurs in obedience to the commission of the Word, where God gives Himself as its object, where it is true according to His judgement, then its earthly human character is not set aside. Rather, Barth says,

> . . . through the new robe of righteousness thrown over it, it becomes in this earthly character a fresh event, the event of God speaking Himself in the sphere of human events, the event of Jesus Christ's vicariate plenipotentiary.[140]

Barth argues that the Reformers saw preaching in this light, and the citation of several authorities from the Reformation serves to seal his argument.

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[139] C.D. I 1, p. 105. (Barth's concern here is not to dismiss the question of responsibility from the human side in preaching. He does seek, however, to dismiss the question of precise definition of how the human and the divine operate together in the event of preaching as the Word of God.)

[140] C.D. I 1, p. 106.

It is not hard to see that in such a description of preaching Barth refuses to settle for the Neo-Protestant idea of preaching as self-exposition, nor will he follow the path of orthodoxy in freezing the relation between revelation and Scripture. Rather we have on the one hand the insistence that preaching must be defined in terms of its relation to revelation, and on the other hand revelation must be defined in terms of its relation to preaching. The Word of God as revelation is the presupposition of preaching. But likewise the Word of God as preached is the consequence of revelation. Along these lines Barth's arguments make clear that preaching is the correlate of revelation.

From such a perspective on the Word of God as preached Barth proceeds to discuss the second form of the Word, the Word of God as written. He makes clear that the Word of God which is the commission, object, judgement, and the event of proclamation is not grounded in the Church's own hidden depth, as though the Church could thus speak the Word by a path of self-reflection. God is indeed present in the Church, the promise is fulfilled! But the God present with the Church is not the only, nor the last word to be uttered. Barth contends,

> He is immanent in her only because He transcends her. That is the fact which makes her recollection of God's past revelation different from one of reflection upon an essential ground timelessly her own: it hath pleased God to be her God, otherwise than in pure immanence.[141]

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[141] C.D. I 1, p. 113.

The situation that expresses this fact is found in the relation of Scripture to proclamation, for Scripture while an entity similar to proclamation in that it is a temporal phenomena, is yet different in order and superior to proclamation. Scripture is the "concrete form of the reason why the recollection upon the basis of which we expect God's revelation cannot be the recollection of the timeless essence of the Church."[142] Inasmuch as Scripture is there as canon the Church acknowledges that she is not left alone in her proclamation. Rather the Church's proclamation accepts the specific texts of the given canon as determinative in her life. The Scripture is ". . . her direction for work, her marching orders, with which not only her preaching but she herself stands or falls."[143] Thus Barth sets the significance of the Bible for preaching.

But there is more. For Scripture is a form of the Word of God, and this is a way closely akin to Barth's definition of proclamation as Word of God. Barth refuses to make an absolute identity between revelation and Scripture. Reflection on 18th century orthodoxy precludes establishing such an identity. Rather Barth declares that in the Bible ". . . we are dealing with Scripture not in a primary but in a secondary sense: for it itself is the deposit of proclamation made in the past by the mouth of man." It is, he adds, ". . . proclamation in writing."[144] Scripture and proclamation have both a similarity and dissimilarity. Barth says,

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[142] C.D. I 1, p. 113.

[143] C.D. I 1, p. 114.

[144] C.D. I 1, p. 114.

> Both entities stand side by side within one genus; there Scripture as the beginning, here the preaching to be carried out today; Jeremiah and Paul at the beginning, and preacher of the Gospel today at the end of one and the same series.[145]

The God who makes Himself known uses the vehicles of Scripture and proclamation in their witness as the means of making the recollected revelation present as Word. Such a view not only avows definite things about the Bible, but it likewise serves to elevate in significance the preaching done today.

But if there is a similarity, there is also a dissimilarity. For Scripture stands in a superior, ". . . purely constitutive significance. . . " in relation to proclamation. There is a ". . . fundamental distinction of the written word of the prophets and apostles above all other human words spoken later in the Church and needing to be spoken today."[146] The canon stands as the form of apostolic succession in the Church. In this it exercises its distinct difference from present proclamation.

Barth argues for Scripture as a form of the Word of God in much the same way found in speaking of proclamation as Word. He asserts,

> The recollection of God's past revelation, the discovery of canon, faith in the promise of the prophets and apostles, or, better, the Bible's imposition of itself on the strength of its special content, and there the existence of a real apostolic succession--all that is an event and can only be understood as

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[145] C.D. I 1, p. 114.

[146] C.D. I 1, p. 115.

> an event. In this event the Bible is the Word of God, i.e., in this word the human word of prophets and apostles represents the Word of God Himself, exactly in the way in which, in the event of real proclamation, the latter is to become the human word of the preacher today, namely, man's word to which God has given Himself as the object, man's word which is acknowledged and accepted by God as good, man's word in which God's own language to us is an event.[147]

And as in the case of proclamation, Barth says, "This very fact of the language of God Himself becoming an event in human word of the Bible is, however, God's business and not ours. That is what we mean when we call the Bible the Word of God."[148] The Bible as the Word of God is an act of God's sovereign and free grace. Such an affirmation rests on faith and we are not to inquire, either through sceptical investigation or believing doctrines of verbal inspiration, how the Bible is the Word of God.

The third form of the Word of God is the Word of God revealed. Both the Bible and proclamation in the form of exposition of the Bible are not in and of themselves God's revelation. But as witnesses to revelation both the Bible and proclamation are forms of the Word of God. Basic to an understanding of the Bible as the Word of God is the word "attestation." Barth Says, "To attest means to point in a definite direction beyond oneself to something else. Attestation is, therefore, the service of this something else, in which the witness answers for the truth of this something else."[149] The revelation to which the witnesses of the Bible point is something different from the best and most faithful narrative about it. Standing behind Scripture there is the central event of God's revelation of Himself. Revelation happened apart from the existence of Scripture. Barth writes, "What has generated Scripture and what Scripture now on its part attests, did really and finally, once and once for all, happen."[150]

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[147] C.D. I 1, pp. 122-123.

[148] C.D. I 1, p. 123.

That "happening" to which both the Bible and proclamation point, of which they are attestation, is the free act of God's grace. Barth insists,

> When we speak of revelation we are faced with the divine act itself and as such, which, as we had to remember in the past, is the ground and the limit, the presupposition and the proviso of what may be said of the Bible and proclamation as the Word of God.[151]

Once again it is germane to mark the way in which Barth's arguments seek to steer a course between the waywardness of Neo-Protestantism and the forgetfulness of orthodoxy. On the one hand the error of Neo-Protestantism seeking to ground the Church's existence in herself is in view. Against this he argues for an objectively free act of God's grace standing over and above the Church. Indeed, the meaning of God's grace is heralded in the phrase "God with us," but this does not allow for an immanentalism that excludes the transcendence and freedom of God. On the other hand the mistake of orthodoxy which insisted on the objectivity of revelation but cemented revelation to the Bible is in view. Though there is a practical Biblicism in Barth, this does not mean a material Biblicism. God's revelation is not frozen to the written Word, but revelation stands as a free act of God to which the Bible points, and further, revelation leads to the assertion not only of the Bible as a form of the Word of God, but crucially to the assertion that proclamation is also a form of the Word of God. The logic of Barth's argument points to the free act of God's grace declaring both the judgement and mercy of God, and beyond that points to the fact that revelation is present to us through the attestation of Scripture and the present proclamation based on Scripture. Only in this sequence can we speak of the Bible and proclamation as the Word of God. Barth writes,

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[149] C.D. I 1, p. 125

[150] C.D. I 1, p. 129.

[151] C.D. I 1, p. 132.

> Because (1) it is only as repeating the Biblical testimony to past revelation that proclamation is real proclamation, i.e., the promise of future revelation, and because (2) it is only in its relation to the past revelation attested in it that the Bible is real attestation, i.e., the actual recollection of this past revelation--therefore the freedom of God's grace is the ground and the limit, the presupposition and the proviso of the statements, in virtue of which proclamation and the Bible are the Word of God.[152]

Barth's concern is to root every present act of revelation in that act which happened once for all, asserting ". . . all fulfilled time as fulfilled by the fullness of time."[153] Thus to say revelation is to say "The Word became flesh." "Revelation in fact does not differ from the Person of Jesus Christ, and again does not differ from the reconciliation that took place in Him."[154] Thus revelation cannot be explained in terms of man and his situation in the first instance, but as Barth says, ". . . only as the knowledge of God proceeding from God as free undeserved grace."[155]

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[152] C.D. I 1, p. 134.

The basic epistemological question is thus answered in terms of the three-fold form of the Word of God. God makes Himself known in Jesus Christ, the _illic et tunc_ of revelation, and that becomes for us _hic et nunc_ an act of God's unveiling through the attestation of the Bible and the present event of proclamation which repeats in our context the attestation of Scripture. It thus becomes a real _hic et nunc_ in which God speaks.

Barth summarizes the unity of the three forms of the Word of God in the following manner.

> The revealed Word of God we know only from the Scripture adopted by Church proclamation, or from Church proclamation based on Scripture.
>
> The written Word of God we know only through the revelation which makes proclamation possible or through proclamation made possible by revelation.

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[153] C.D. I 1, p. 134.

[154] C.D. I 1, p. 134.

[155] C.D. I 1, p. 135.

> The proclaimed Word of God we know only by knowing the revelation attested through Scripture, or by knowing the Scripture which attests revelation.[156]

Barth adds that the only analogy suitable for this relation of the three forms of the Word of God is the doctrine of the Trinity.

The preceding discussion gives something of the basic contours of Barth's development of the three-fold form of the Word of God. In steering his way between the errors of Neo-Protestantism and 18th century orthodoxy, and in an attempt to recover what he sees to be the authentic note of the Reformers, Barth makes his case in terms of God's self-revelation which was and continues to be a dynamic event. The lines of his reasoning make clear that proclamation is a germane correlate of revelation and Scripture as witness to revelation. Paul Lehmann contends that the formulations in the Prolegomena represent

> . . . the epistemological result of theological reflection upon a quite pragmatic fact. In the Church preaching goes on, on the basis of the Bible. This verbal behaviour is either senseless action or it is the central action of the Church.[157]

The interrelation of preaching and revelation which is manifest in the above discussion finds quite practical discussion in a more modest context as Barth discusses the issues of preaching in The Preaching of the Gospel. There Barth talks about both the negative and positive factors of the relation of revelation and preaching. Negatively, revelation means that it is not the function of the preacher to reveal God or to act as his intermediary. He says,

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[156] C.D. I 1, p. 136.

[157] Lehmann, op. cit., p. 346.

> When the Gospel is preached God speaks: there is no question of the preacher revealing anything or of a revelation being conveyed through him. . . . Revelation is a closed system in which God is the subject, the object, and the middle term.[158]

The emphasis here is on the fact that present revelation in preaching is God's act, not man's. Barth says, ". . . if Christ deigns to be present when we are speaking, it is precisely because the action is God's, not ours."[159] On the positive side, the consequence of revelation resides in the fact that "The starting point is the fact God wills to reveal Himself, He Himself bears witness to His Revelation; He has effected it and will effect it."[160] Man's part is obedience. The issue in preaching is ". . . the exercise of sovereign power on the part of God and obedience on the part of man."[161] Suffice it to say that Barth's consistent concentration on preaching is rooted in his consistent emphasis on revelation.

We set out to address ourselves to the question of how it is that preaching comes to be a central category for Barth's dogmatic schema. Our investigation has indicated that preaching is the logical correlate of revelation. The God who has revealed Himself, will reveal Himself in the present. Proclamation, as preaching based on Scripture and sacrament, is the primary focus of that present self-revelation of God. Through the spoken and enacted word the Word of God encounters us in our present situation.

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[158] Barth, The Preaching of the Gospel, op. cit., p. 12.

[159] Ibid., p. 14.

[160] Ibid., p. 16.

[161] Ibid., p. 16.

D. We turn, in this last section, to a discussion of the basic affirmations concerning preaching made by Barth. The preceding discussion has been confined primarily to the Prolegomena to Church Dogmatics. In what follows we shall seek to underline certain things already emphasized and to expand other things as the discussion of preaching occurs in other contexts in Barth. While various rubrics could be employed we shall seek to summarize Barth's discussion of preaching under the following three: 1. Preaching as the integral Word of God; 2. Preaching as obedience to a commission; and 3. Preaching as witness.

1. Preaching as the integral Word of God. Certainly the preceding discussion makes it clear that any concept of preaching in Barth revolves around preaching as a form of the Word of God. The designation is an old one, but in Barth it assumes a central position and receives careful and extensive attention. Both Luther and Calvin provide contexts where preaching is heralded as the Word of God. Barth frequently cites such contentions. But it has been the case that Barth takes preaching as the Word of God and systematically develops the meaning of that claim in a way unmatched prior to his Dogmatics. The central event of revelation in Jesus Christ has as logical correlates the Word of God written

and the Word of God preached. In the present event of preaching the Word of God encounters us in our immediate context.

The point to be made, first, is that in speaking of preaching as the Word of God Barth argues that preaching is truly an integral form of the Word of God. Wingren siezes upon certain qualifications Barth makes in his discussion of Scripture and proclamation as forms of the Word and suggests that there is a definite obscurity involved in Barth's arguments for these two forms of the Word. He writes, "In comparison with this absolute revelation (Jesus Christ) the written and the spoken word appear rather obscure. The activity in the first revelation, in Christ, does not continue through the written and the spoken word. That emphasis is not present in Barth."[162] It is true that Barth does not seek to make an absolute identity between the Word of God revealed and the Word of God written and proclaimed. In this sense there is a difference between the revelation in Jesus Christ and the witnesses or "signs" in the form of Scripture and proclamation. But it must be said, contrary to Wingren, that there are places where Barth argues for the integrity of both Scripture and preaching as Word of God. Barth contends that in speaking of preaching as a form of the Word we are not speaking of a diluted or weakened form of the Word. For instance, he writes,

> However sharply the difference between the Lord and the servants must be stressed, the very solemnity of this relationship, founded and formed as it is by the resurrection of Jesus, forbids us to entertain the notion that,

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[162] Wingren, Theology in Conflict, op. cit., p. 124.

> with the transference of the Word of God to its biblical witnesses and the self-communication of Jesus Christ to His followers, anything in the nature of a weakening or dilution, or even a disturbance or distortion of the Word of God has taken place. The same thing is fundamentally true of the relationship of Holy Scripture with revelation on the one hand, and with the preaching of the Church on the other. Once again in a different form, but here too neither diminished nor weakened, we have to do really and truly with the one integral Word of God, with God Himself, with Jesus Christ through the Holy Ghost, just as certainly as Holy Scripture, and in and through it God's self-revelation, is given to the Church.[163]

His argument seeks to take full cognizance of the human factor in preaching, but at the same time insists that because God is the subject and object of revelation, then truly the human venture of preaching in all its contingency and weakness from the human side is nevertheless the integral Word of God to be believed.

A second point to be underscored is the fact that Barth does not refer to just anything that goes under the category of "preaching" in making his claims for preaching as the integral Word of God. The close interrelationship of the three forms of the Word delimits the referent for Barth's assertions about preaching. The Word preached stands in integral relationship with the Word written. He formally defines preaching as

> . . . the attempt, assayed by one called thereto in the Church, to express in his own words in the form of an exposition of a portion of the Biblical testimony to revelation, and to make comprehensible to men of his day, the promise of God's revelation, reconciliation, and calling, as these are to be expected here and now.[164]

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[163] C.D. I 2, p. 744.

[164] C.D. I 1, p. 61.

This means, simply, that preaching as self-exposition, preaching which seeks to establish its ground on the basis of the self-understanding of the world, preaching that is merely personal opinion on various subjects, does not carry with it the claim Barth makes for preaching as the Word of God. Or to put it in another way, the theological definition of preaching involves quite definite homiletical practices. When preaching seeks to be obedient to the commission given in God's revelation of Himself, when preaching is an attempt through exposition of the Biblical witness to express the meaning of that revelation today, then Barth makes bold to claim for such preaching that it is the integral Word of God to the Church today. He writes, for instance,

> . . . we must begin with the affirmation that, by the grace of revelation and its witnesses, God commits Himself with His eternal Word to the preaching of the Christian Church in such a way that this preaching is not merely a proclamation of human ideas and convictions, but, like the existence of Jesus Christ Himself, like the testimony of the prophets and apostles on which it is founded and by which it lives, it is God's own proclamation.[165]

The third point germane to the discussion of preaching as the integral Word of God is the settled recognition that we are involved in the reality of grace and the occurrence of a miracle. Preaching proceeds on the basis of the free grace of God in which God has made Himself known. Barth says,

> What has happened in order that the proclamation of the Church may be the Word of God, and that men in the Church may really proclaim the Word of God, has already happened, as, generally

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[165] C.D. I 2, p. 746.

> speaking everything that has to happen in order that the Church may live as the Church of God has already happened . . . . Our business can only be that of accepting as something which has happened for us and to us that which has already been performed and fulfilled in Jesus Christ in respect of the whole life of the Church.[166]

The possibility of preaching as the Word of God is grounded in the reality of the event of God's grace in Jesus Christ. Barth says, "Humanly speaking, it is a stark impossibility which here stares us in the face--that men should speak what God speaks; but it is one which in Jesus Christ is already overcome."[167] The obvious frailty of our speaking for God is always before us, but that frailty and weakness is countered by the grace of God's revelation of Himself. Barth writes,

> God Himself with His Word and Spirit steps forth, and has already stepped forth . . . in order to make possible for man that which is not possible for him of himself. It requires the God Who Himself speaks for Himself, it requires the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the power which enables us to speak rightly of God . . .[168]

The reality of preaching as the Word of God is a divine victory concealed in human frailty. "God . . . makes good what we do badly."[169] Thus the proper category for consideration of preaching as the Word of God is miracle, the working of God in the midst of human frailty.[170]

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[166] C.D. I 2, p. 748.

[167] C.D. I 2, p. 749.

[168] C.D. I 2, p. 751.

[169] C.D. I 2, p. 751.

[170] C.D. I 2, p. 751.

This leads to a fourth point, a point crucial for an understanding of preaching as the Word of God. The basic miracle which makes possible present preaching as Word of God is the miracle of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Words quoted above from the first volumes indicate the cruciality of the resurrection in Barth's contention that preaching is the Word of God. The relationship between Lord and servant is founded and formed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The possibility of proclamation as Word of God rests on the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the power which enables us to speak rightly of God. The central miracle is that Jesus Christ lives and in his present Risen existence calls men and in manifold ways bears witness to Himself.

The basic lines are suggested in the Prolegomena, but it is in the final volumes of the Dogmatics that the resurrection of Jesus Christ in relation to proclamation receives extensive attention. In Volume IV, part 3 Barth develops the doctrine of Reconciliation in terms of the Prophetic Office of Christ. The consistent theme of this latter discussion is that Jesus Christ is His own self-witness. The event of reconciliation in Jesus Christ. ". . . is not dark and dumb but perspicuous and vocal, . ."[171] As Barth turns his attention to the life of the Christian community and the life of the individual Christian he repeatedly insists that ". . . it is first Jesus Christ Himself in His person and action who declares Himself to be the Reconciler and as such also the Revealer, and then, on the basis of the latter aspect, there is human kerygma and apostolate and didaskalia in the Gentile World."[172] Basic to all such discussion is the statement that Jesus Christ lives.[173] Barth writes,

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[171] C.D. IV 3, p. 8.

> . . . Jesus Christ lives is the confession of the faith which knows Him . . . This does not mean that this confession is an utterance or expression and to that extent a product or work of faith, its favourite child, so that what is confessed is true and real only on the presupposition of faith. It is faith that confesses. But it does not do so on its own initiative or in its own power. . . . He lives, and the believer lives by the fact that Jesus Christ lives, and not vice versa. . . . in the fact that He lives it (faith) has not merely its object and content, but its origin. . . . as He lives, Jesus Christ speaks for Himself. . .[174]

In another context, as he discusses "The Promise of the Spirit," Barth points to the significance of the resurrection in these words,

> His work, His being and action, were not augmented by His resurrection. How could they be? His work was finished. Yet without this event following His life and death, His finished being and action, this alteration of the situation between God and man as accomplished in Him, would have remained shut up in Him, because it would have been completely hidden from the disciples and the world and us, being quite unknown and therefore without practical significance. Without this event it would have lacked the glory and revelation and therefore the prophetic character of His being and action.[175]

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[172] C.D. IV 3, p. 11.

[173] C.D. IV 3, p. 39.

[174] C.D. IV 3, pp. 45-46.

[175] C.D. IV 3, p. 282.

The practical implication of such assertions leads to the conclusion that today both the Christian and the non-Christian are confronted by the living Lord who bears witness to Himself. Speaking of the man of today, Barth says,

> He is confronted by the Word spoken not only then and one day, but also directly here and now. And in this confrontation he is sustained, shielded, comforted, nourished and guided in all the obscurity of his way. As Jesus Christ in His today of Easter and of the last day encounters us in our today, He is with us all the days, and is the hope of all of us.[176]

The line of reasoning pursued in such discussions makes clear the fact that in speaking of proclamation as a form of the Word of God we are plunged into the center of the miracle of the resurrection. As Jesus Christ lives He makes Himself known through the obedient witness of preaching. The prophetic work of the Risen Lord incorporates our vocation as witness.

By way of summary it can be acknowledged that at the beginning and at the end of Barth's dogmatic endeavors the possibility of speaking of God finds its grounds in the event of Jesus Christ. In Volume I of the Church Dogmatics Barth asserts that the Church can really speak about God on the basis of what has happened in Jesus Christ. He writes,

> There, in Him, it (the church) is not unworthy and not incapable of speaking about God. There it is all it has to be for this purpose. There it has everything it needs for it. There it is justified and sanctified, blessed and

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[176] C.D. IV 3, p. 350.

> authorized in its action. There the miracle has already happened which has to happen if a man is to speak about God--really speak about God.[177]

The possibility of the Church in her proclamation speaking the integral Word of God is firmly anchored to the miracle which occurred in the coming of Jesus Christ. The same note is consistently present throughout the Dogmatics and the last volumes still strike the same chord. The development of the doctrine of the Prophetic Office of Christ in Volume IV 3, a doctrine Barth sees as neglected in past centuries, and one which receives a new interpretation in his work, makes clear that only as the Risen Christ lives and works today does the Church find it possible to speak of God. Barth contends,

> As the Resurrected, He lives as the One who not only then, but then once and for all, was humiliated and exalted, offered up and triumphant, for the justification and sanctification of all men, living not only in His own age but in every age as the Lord of all time. He lives in every today as the One in whom there took place yesterday, in His time, the reconciliation of the world to God. As such, however, He does not live in idleness, but actively in enlightening power of His Holy Spirit as the Revealer of that which took place in and by Him alone. . . . He alone is the Speaker of the Word of God as well as the Doer of His Work.[178]

This consistent emphasis, however, should not be taken as basis for presumption in preaching. The expectancy that the Risen Lord will speak does not give to preaching ". . . the quality of semi-devine revelation."[179] The Church still speaks in all its humanity. The preacher still speaks as a human being in all his limitations and frailty. There is no license for presumption or pretension in the actual practice of preaching. In his lectures on preaching, Barth gives full weight to the expectancy that God will speak in the present proclamation of the Church, but as the preacher does his labored task of exegesis and preaching, he faces the duty of ". . . avoiding pretensiouness."[180] The task of preaching is a quite human event of attempted obedience. But on the other hand, neither is the preacher to regard the relativity, sinfulness, and fallibility of his undertaking as absolute. That in itself is a form of pretentiousness.[181] Preaching as obedient human venture does not seek to eliminate the frailty of its performance, for it is just in the midst of all such frailty and weakness that God Himself speaks for Himself. This is the proper guard against the clericalism that borders on arrogance and presumes that miracle is not miracle, grace, not grace. And it must also be added that confidence in the promise that God will speak is no basis for any ". . . pusillanimity and indolence."[182] on the part of the preacher. There is no excuse for either diffidence or nonchallance. Rather, living by the promise that the God who has spoken will speak, the preaching of the Church goes forth without pretensions and without reservations.

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[177] C.D. I 2, p. 757.

[178] ~~C.D.~~ IV 3, pp. 605-606.

[179] C.D. IV 3, p. 836.

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[180] Barth, The Preaching of the Gospel, op. cit., p. 45.

[181] C.D. I 2, p. 755.

[182] C.D. I 2, p. 756.

The further point to be reckoned with at this juncture is that while Barth claims for preaching that it is indeed an integral form of the Word of God, made so by the activity of the Risen Christ as His own self-witness, there remains a quite strong emphasis on the human venture of speaking of God. Barth insists that ". . . in exercise of this prophetic office of His, even though it is He alone who controls it, He does not will to be alone. Controlling and exercising it, He calls certain men to His side and commissions them to be His disciples. . . ."[183] That leads us to discussion of preaching as obedience to a commission and preaching as witness.

2. Preaching as obedience to a commission. In writing of proclamation as the Word of God Barth focuses a vital issue in saying, "What God can do? is different from the question, What is the commission laid on us through the promise given to the Church?"[184] In such words there comes to expression a recurring theme in Barth's discussion of preaching. On the one hand the focus of attention turns repeatedly to the activity of God in His making Himself known. On the other hand, the focus of attention turns to the human activity in preaching. And when the eye turns in the latter direction one key word is "commission." The preaching of the church does not take its cue from the desire to express religious opinions or conviction. Nor does preaching occur as self-exposition on the part of the preacher. Preaching is not a convenient

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[183] C.D. IV 3, p. 606.

[184] C.D. I 1, p. 60.

act of the Church which she may dispense with in a moment of disillusionment or preoccupation with other concerns. Preaching is not done in the effort to solve man's problems, psychological, social, or political. Rather, preaching goes forth on the basis of ". . . God's positive behest."[185] The crucial test to be put to the human venture of preaching is fundamentally, ". . . whether it is a service, whether it has a commission."[186]

The discussion of the commission given to preaching occurs in a variety of contexts in Barth's writings. At least three vital concerns run through the currents of conversation concerning commission. Various rubrics might be used to define the issues. We shall seek to focus the concerns of Barth by underscoring the judgement that the commission of preaching raises the issues obedience, context, and freedom in preaching.

First, commission defines the human venture of preaching as obedience. Already we have noted that the strong emphasis on the Risen Christ as His own self-witness does not eliminate the vital role of those who are called to participate in the prophetic work of Christ.[187] With a particular eye to preaching in the life of the Christian community Barth makes clear that God in speaking His Word uses the ministry of a man in the congregation of God's people. About this man he remarks,

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[185] C.D. I 1, p. 100.

[186] C.D. I 1, p. 58.

[187] For extended discussion of "The Vocation of Man" cf. C.D. IV 3, p. 481 ff.

"Such a man fulfils the vocation to which the Church has called him, and through his ministry, the Church is obedient to the mission entrusted to her."[188] Here the human activity of preaching is defined in terms of obedience to a commission. Barth adds to this definition a further word, "Preaching follows from the command given to the Church to serve the Word of God."[189] Preaching does not arise from the imminent desire in man to say something; it is not patterned after other modes of communication. Rather the word of preaching arises in the act of obedience to a given commission.[190]

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[188] Barth, The Preaching of the Gospel, p. 9.

[189] Ibid., p. 9.

[190] It is perhaps germane here to acknowledge the fact that Barth's idea of the uniqueness of proclamation as obedience to the commission of the Word of God raises the question as to whether proclamation is without analogy to other forms of human communication. Two things can be said at this point. First, though the idea of analogia fidei is not discussed as such in the development of the ideas of the commission of the Word of God, the substance of such is present. Consistent with his rejection of the analogia entis, it appears that Barth will not argue for proclamation on the basis of some analogia verbi or an analogia communcationis. The basic analogy for proclamation as a form of communication is the analogy of grace, or the fact that God speaks His Word of grace. It is God's Word which creates the possibility of proclamation as a form of the Word, and it is crucial that proclamation be understood from within the implied analogia fidei. However, in the second place, it must be acknowledged that Barth does not refuse to reckon with the problems of human communication involved in proclamation as a form of human communication. Barth insists that the only language used in proclamation is the normal language common to man, and this involves recognition of the linguistic problem. However, he is not fascinated with scientific study of linguistics and seeks to understand the function of language in a limited theological context, consistent with the rejection of the analogia entis. Further, it can be acknowledged that Barth recognizes that there are parallels in Classical Greek for the use of kerrusein and Keryx in the New Testament. However, he notes definite distinctions between the idea of

In discussing proclamation in the early volumes of the Church Dogmatics the emphasis on commission is of primary concern. The vital question concerning preaching is its consciouness of obeying a commission, pointing to its word as ". . . having been previously spoken through God Himself."[191] The basic question on man's side ". . . can only be that of accepting a commission."[192] The crucial importance of obedience to a commission is underscored by Barth in these words:

> If man's language about God claims to be proclamation it claims not to be grace, but the service of grace, the means of grace. Were the will here questioned the will of man to reach out beyond

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'herald' in Classical Greek and in the New Testament. Thus, not even the parallel in Classical Greek can be drawn upon as an analogy for Christian preaching. (Cf. C.D. IV 2, p. 201 ff.) Barth's discussion of proclamation as obedience to the commission of the Word of God is consistent with his insistence upon the analogia fidei. (It should be recognized that while the analogia fidei is of some importance in earlier parts of Barth, he appears to abandon this scheme in his later writings.) There are, of course, those who argue that Barth's way of discussing proclamation in a limited theological context results in neglect of real concern for the 'how' of language. (Cf., for instance, Paul Van Buren in his introductory essay in Barth, God Here and Now, op. cit., p. xv.) But if Barth can be faulted for his neglect of the 'how' of language as explored in communication and linguistic theory in general, it must be added that he cannot be faulted for significant attention to a facet of communication neglected in much conversation of the problem of communication among churchmen, namely the theological factor. Barth's development of the prophetic office of Christ as his own self-witness represents a sophisticated attempt to deal with this side of the matter. Fundamentally, what can be said in summary is that Barth's refusal to discuss proclamation by analogy to other forms of human communication represents a self-conscious decision to base his arguments on the sole base of God's speaking His Word in Jesus Christ.

[191] C.D. I 1, p. 57.

[192] C.D. I 1, p. 57.

> himself to put himself with his word about God in the place of God, it would be blasphemous rebellion. Therefore it can have nothing to do with such a claim and expectation. But it has to do with the fact that the Church has a commission to serve the Word of God, and that therefore in her there must ever and anon be found the will to take up the commission.[193]

Preaching thus ventures forth not on the basis of lofty experiences of man, not on the basis of man's reflection on his own religious genius or his particular self-understanding, but rather on the basis of obedience to a commission ". . . to speak about God to and for men, a commission which she (the church) would be neglecting were she to seek to proclaim where and what she had no commission at all to proclaim."[194]

The commission given involves the Church in the quite concrete act of preaching. The only validation of the commission the Church can give, Barth contends, is either repetition of the order received in the form we think we have received it, or creation of a fact by obeying the commission.[195] Over and above the command to believe, love, and hope, and over and above the command to compassionate service, ". . . Jesus Christ has given the Church the commission to proclaim, and to proclaim through preaching and sacrament."[196] Along such lines Barth makes quite clear that proclamation as obedient response to a given commission is at the heart of the Church's existence, and he further makes clear that such proclamation does not arise from man's desire to speak something, however nobly religious that word may be. Rather obedient response is, from man's side, a keynote in understanding preaching.

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[193] C.D. I 1, p. 57.

[194] C.D. I 1, p. 61.

[195] C.D. I 1, p. 62.

[196] C.D. I 1, p. 62.

We have noted earlier that in discussion of the three-fold form of the Word of God the note of the given commission is set at the forefront of Barth's ideas. The first vital connection between the Word of God and preaching is stated in the assertion, "The Word of God is the commission upon the givenness of which proclamation must rest, if it is to be real proclamation.[197] The word of preaching rests in the first place upon the Word of God that comes as a commission to be obeyed. It is in its nature as commission that the Word of God calls forth particular verbal behaviour on the part of the Church. Again in this context Barth carefully seeks to eliminate subjectively derived motivations as the basis of preaching. He insists that preaching cannot be based on various relations and orders of value imminent in the existence of man. Neither can it be based on the grounds of personal convictions that seek special articulation. The impact of such subjectively derived ideas, values, and convictions must be recognized, but at the same time God's positive behest is superior to such impulses to preach, is of a different order altogether. Prior to all human desires to impart values and convictions is the question of obedience to the Word of God as the commission of preaching. Barth insists that this is

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[197] C.D. I 1, p. 99.

> . . . a commission we cannot take unto ourselves or take for granted in any way, which we can simply just receive and possess in the act of reception, which simply touches, elevates, and defines us and the entire world of our motivations from without, as a behest that comes to us in an unforeseen way, to which . . . we can only take up an attitude of repeating it so far as we think we have heard it, and seeking to conform to it as well or ill as we can.[198]

The contours of Barth's thought at this juncture make clear that he sets himself over against Neo-Protestant subjectivity as the basis of preaching, and equally as much against orthodoxy's forgetfulness of the essential relation of preaching to the Word of God. The first note to be struck concerns God's revelation of Himself as the basis of preaching. But that revelation as Word of God involves an inescapable commission which links the act of obedient proclamation to the very nature of the Word itself. Along these lines the given commission is integral to any discussion of God's action in preaching, and subsequently man's response of obedience is at the heart of the concept of preaching.

In the second place, the emphasis on commission serves to define the basic content of preaching. One must not distort such a statement by assuming that Barth would endorse some kind of scholastic orthodoxy concerning the content of preaching. But he does see that the character of the commmission sets the character of the proclamation. Or put in another way: inasmuch as the Word of God is the commission upon which preaching proceeds, then it follows that the character of that preaching centers around the dynamic event of the Word of God in Jesus

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[198] C.D. I 1, p. 101.

Christ. That sounds traditional enough. But in an age when the content of preaching was consumed with "the preacher's self-exposition," or with liberal social ethics, or with orthodoxy's "doctrines," it is apparent that Barth is confronting a crucial issue. And it may be said, by way of parenthesis, that a side glance at preaching today would indicate that the issue is not dead.

In indicating that the commission is determinative for the content of preaching there is no effort to suggest that dogmatics thereby dictates the content of preaching. That Barth will not sanction. Dogmatics cannot supply preaching with its word, but quite to the contrary, dogmatics proceeds from hearing the word of preaching. Barth, in discussing the relation of preaching and dogmatics, writes, ". . . dogmatics can only begin with the hearing of the Word of God, and indeed the hearing of it in the proclamation of the Church."[199]

Perhaps one of the best ways to see how Barth relates commission and content rests in examination of exegetical discussion in various contexts in the Church Dogmatics. For instance, the discussion of "The Royal Man"[200] demonstrates the integral relation of commission and content. On the one hand Barth notes how the disciples' confrontation with Jesus issued in commission. He marks that in such confrontation the community was constituted, edified, directed, and maintained. Then Barth adds,

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[199] C.D. I 2, p. 775.

[200] C.D. IV 2, p. 154 ff.

> But there was more to it than that. For as it heard Him speak, it saw the surrounding world, the nations and their orders and disorders, the whole cosmos, confronted and addressed by Him. It heard His Word as the Word of reconciliation intended for the world and directed to it. And so, when it heard Him speak His Word, it knew at once to whom it was spoken and what it had itself to do when it heard it--to go and proclaim to the world what He had proclaimed.[201]

The life act of the Royal Man places a definite compulsion on the hearers of His Word. The Church that hears His Word cannot but take it up and repeat it to the world, and that indeed is basic to its life. Hearing Jesus' Word constitutes the commission.

But on the other hand, hearing Jesus' Word is constitutive for the content of what it is the disciples herald to the world. The disciples, according to Barth, conceive their task in terms of taking up the kerygma of Jesus. Barth does not enter at this point the discussion of whether or not we can actually recover the "kerygma of Jesus." He does, however, closely conjoin the issue of commission and content. He can say that the problem of salvation hinges on the ". . . existence or non-existence of preachers,"[202] and point to the cruciality of the commissioning of those who take up the proclaiming of the saving Word. Barth insists that the problem of such preachers is that of their sending. He writes, "They can be preachers only as . . . they are 'apostles', i.e., men who are sent."[203] But their sending does not rest on a direct encount[illegible]ith the One who is sent, Jesus Christ. Barth then asks, "Is it not at once apparent that their (the apostles) situation . . . is concretely limited and in this way determined and characterized, not merely by the transcendent God as such, but immanently by His becoming man?"[204] Then there follows, on Barth's score, the clear assertion that the nature of their being sent determines for the disciples the nature of the word they uttered. He insists,

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[201] C.D. IV 2, p. 195.

[202] C.D. IV 2, p. 207.

[203] Ibid., p. 207.

> It is the kurussein of Jesus Himself, His self-proclamation, that is to form the content of their kurussein. How, then, can it turn in upon itself? How can it be grounded in itself? How can it make this superfluous? It is a call to hearing, faith and confession, news of accomplished salvation, to the extent that it derives from His sending, consists in the execution of His commission, and therefore, dependent absolutely on His sending and commission, takes up and reproduces the kerygma of Jesus.[205]

It is just because of this relation of commission and content that it can be said, "He who heareth you heareth me." It is patently apparent that here Barth sets his face against the idea that preaching takes its cue from the self-understanding of faith, the idea that preaching consists of the self-exposition of the preacher, and the idea that preaching concerns itself with noble ideas or ideologies born of man's genius, religious or non-religious. The content of the word of preaching issues from that distinctive Word in Jesus Christ, and not from ". . . appeal to the undoubted philosophy, scholarship, eloquence, moral impeccability, and personal Christianity of the preacher."[206] Inasmuch as the commission arises from the dynamic Word of God in Jesus Christ, it follows that the content of the preaching done by commissioned preachers arises from that same center.

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[204] C.D. IV 2, p. 208.

[205] C.D. IV 2, p. 208.

In another context Barth makes essentially the same emphasis along different lines. The text being discussed in Romans 9-11. In this context Barth stresses the fact that the occurrence of Jesus Christ creates for itself messengers who are sent. It is the fact of their being sent that legitimizes the preaching of the messengers. He then goes on to add that the written word becomes kerygma on the basis of one supreme presupposition--mission. He writes,

> Mission--that is the cardinal presupposition of that event of proclamation and therefore of hearing and therefore of believing and therefore of confessing what is written in the Bible. Mission is necessary in order that beyond the written character and reading of the witness the culminating point of encounter with the attested revelation may be reached.[207]

Here we meet reflection on the point made earlier, namely, the correlate of revelation is preaching. The mere existence of the written word does not in itself effect encounter. This is what orthodoxy seemed to have forgotten. Beyond the written word there is the spoken word which in obedience to the given commission, and in dependence upon the present activity of God, becomes the arena of encounter with the revelation. But while acknowledging that the given commission implies a spoken word beyond the written word, it is at the same time clear that the spoken word is derived from the witness to Jesus Christ that is written. Barth writes,

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[206] C.D. IV 2, p. 208.

[207] C.D. II 2, p. 251.

> . . . if it is true that men are claimed . . . on the ground that Scripture has opened itself to them, this must mean that the proclamation has encountered these men which does not consist in a mere repetition of the written word, or proceed from human arbitrariness with regard to this word, but which rests in fact on mission. It must be the proclamation which according to the terms of its commission proceeds from the object of the word of Scripture, and therefore does not dominate the word of Scripture, but serves it by calling attention to its fulfilment as such, and therefore interprets it according to its own intended meaning. It must be proclamation which simply discharges its task of delivering the good news that the coming of this Fulfiller of the Law and His resurrection from the dead have occurred as Scripture prophesied.[208]

The discussion here underscores the emphasis that the given commission legitimizes the preaching of disciples, and at the same time it shapes the content of what is to be preached. Also we meet here the way in which the three-fold form of the Word of God determines the concept of preaching. The event of revelation in Jesus Christ is the occasion that sends men forth with a particular word for the world. But that word hinges on the written witness to the event of revelation, though it is clear that mere written witness is not enough to effect actual encounter. Men of today encounter the dynamic of God's revelation in the word of preaching that makes present the witness of the written word of Scripture.

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[208] C.D. IV 2, pp. 251-252.

The third facet of the emphasis on commission in Barth centers on the freedom of the Church in her proclamation. The given commission, while on the one hand calling for obedience and establishing the content of preaching, also serves to establish the freedom of proclamation. One occasion for specific discussion of the freedom of the Church in obeying the given commission is found in Barth's essay "The Proclamation of God's Free Grace."[209] The focus of this essay is the sixth theses of the Barmen Declaration, which reads in part as follows:

> The task of the Church, on which its freedom is based, is to deliver by means of preaching and sacrament, in the place of Christ and thus in the service of His own word and work, the proclamation of God's free grace to all people.
>
> We reject the false teaching, according to which the Church, in human self-assurance, may put the Lord's word and work to the service of any arbitrarily chosen wishes, goals, and plans.[210]

It is germane to recall that in the Church's struggle vis a vis Hitler, Barth, along with many others, of course, saw a crisis which confronted the Church with fundamental questions of its life. Out of this struggle there arose the pivotal question of what it means to be a community of people who confess Jesus Christ as Lord. It will be recalled that while the battle against natural theology had various roots, doubtless the struggle in Germany during these crisis years served to focus for Barth the imminent peril of the attempt to ground the Church's life in anything other than the Word of God in Jesus Christ. A German Church which could herald Hitler as "God-sent" became for him warning of the perils of trafficing with natural theology.

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[209] Karl Barth, God Here and Now (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 28 ff.

[210] Ibid., p. 28.

Barth argues that the commission by which the Church lives establishes her freedom. This freedom can be described in terms of the Church's freedom "for" certain things, and freedom "from" certain things. Manifestly the commission established the Church as a community free for the proclamation of the grace of God, that, and that only. Barth says,

> If Jesus Christ, attested to in the Holy Scripture, is the unique Word of God, then there is no getting around the fact that our word, the word the Church has been commissioned to speak, can be no other than precisely this message, "the gospel of God" in this sense.[211]

Or again, in emphasizing the free grace of God, he goes on to say, "Because it is free, it has and keeps its throne and locus in Jesus Christ Himself alone, and therefore the proclamation of the Church may and must be the proclamation of Christ, and nothing else."[212] The Church is free for obedience to the commission to proclaim Jesus Christ, and Him alone.

But freedom is also freedom from certain things. And for Barth this side of freedom liberates the Church from the imminent threats and enticements that present themselves both as quite forceful powers and alluring possibilities.

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[211] Ibid., p. 30.

[212] Ibid., p. 32.

For instance, Barth repeatedly makes the point that the Church is free from the temptation to adopt some philosophy, some existing system, some self-understanding of the world as the cradle for the word to be spoken. He insists that those who proclaim the message ". . . may not force it into some system or philosophy, some world-view or outlook on life."[213] The recurring temptation of the Church is that she will succumb to various pressures and ideologies in the world. Writing in the midst of the debate arising from the Church's confrontation with Hitler, Barth says,

> . . . the mighty temptation of this age, which appears in every shape possible, is that we no longer appreciate the intensity and exclusiveness of the demand which the Divine Word makes as such when looking at the force of other demands.[214]

The subtle temptation to undergird German nationalism and the Hitler regime with the blessing of the gospel serves ever and again to sharpen Barth's knife against the attempt to make man and his systems the primary factor in proclaiming the gospel. To be sure, the Church should be open to the world. She is not off in a corner playing games and sulking. Indeed, Barth says, "The Lord can surely let the world say something to the Church from time to time, which the Church must allow the world to say it."[215] But living by a commission, the Church is not thereby subservient to that word which arises from the world, rather she is free for and in obedience to God. Barth writes,

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[213] Ibid., p. 39.

[214] Barth, Theological Existence Today, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

[215] Barth, God Here and Now, op. cit., p. 42.

> The freedom of the Church is its right and duty to exist in these surroundings (of the world), in joyful and modest openness to the outside. This freedom is based on something the world does not have, which the world can neither give it nor take from it: its commission, and therefore, the message of God's free grace, and therefore its Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore God's manifest and living Word.[216]

Along these lines Barth sets himself firmly against any attempt to force the word of preaching to come to heel before any system, whether it be German nationalism, existentialist self-understanding, a natural theology of whatever stripe, or even a lively concern to "answer" man's questions and solve his pressing problems. In being free for obedience to proclaim God's free grace, the Church is free from the dominating power of man's clever systems.[217]

Let it be added, also, that the freedom given in the commission is freedom from a kind of religious retreat into the Church's own existence. In his extended polemic against "religion" Barth sees a constant threat that religion itself can become a convenient and safe hiding place for the Church. Her piety may indeed tempt the Church to evade the claims of the commission given. Thus Barth insists that the Church ". . . has no line of retreat into a churchly subjectivity. It flees neither into preaching nor into sacrament, neither into exegesis nor into dogmatics . . . . The Church does not escape into prayer either. . . "[218]

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[216] Ibid., pp. 42-43.

[217] Cf. C.D. IV 3, p. 255 ff. for further discussion of Barth's arguments against adopting world views.

Still further, the freedom given in obedience to the commission frees the Church from the tyranny of results and reputation. Barth cannot forget that one of the ways in which 19th century liberalism went astray was just at the point of its attempt to create for itself a hearing in contemporary culture. That era of the Church's life was to be commended for its openness to the world, but corrected at the point where desire to gain a contemporary hearing led to adoption of the essential framework of contemporary thought at the cost of the distinctive word the Church had to speak. The desire to prove its message sufficient for the needs of problem-plagued people and the effort to establish a good reputation in the intellectual community led the Church unduly into slavery to results and reputation. To be sure, Barth can speak of the use of contemporary philosophy in theology,[219] but that does not establish grounds for any attempt to shape the gospel to fit the contours of any one philosophy and thus establish for theology or the Church's preaching a good reputation. On the contrary, Barth insists, that in her proclamation ". . . the Church is not asked whether or not the people accept it, or whether or not it deserves their confidence."[220] The commission given means that in relation to the Word of God in Jesus Christ, the Church can only ". . . deliver it the way a postman delivers his mail; the Church is not asked what it thinks it is thereby starting, or what it makes of the message."[221] Such a statement may well involve significant oversimplification, but on the other hand it also makes quite clear the point that the Church is not in the business of going about its life with an eye fixed on the good results she might accomplish. Results, as Barth sees it, are the business of the risen Christ, the work of God Himself in His self-witness. The part given to the Church is that of sowing, of obedience to a commission. The Church exists by living for this commission, and in that she is free from the tyranny of results and reputation.

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[218] Ibid., p. 41.

[219] Cf. C.D. I 2, p. 728 ff.

[220] Barth, God Here and Now, op. cit., p. 41.

Suffice it to mark at this point the fact that when Barth talks of Church proclamation discussion of the commission of proclamation is an integral facet of the total concept of proclamation. But likewise, where there is talk of commission there is also talk of a joyful freedom. The note recurs throughout Barth's writing. Early in the _Church Dogmatics_ Barth writes at some length of "Freedom In the Church."[222] And in the last pages of Volume IV of the _Dogmatics_ the note is still present as he discusses the Christian hope. For instance, he writes,

> . . . strengthened and encouraged by the thought of what God will finally do, he (the Christian) will take up his ministry on this side of the frontier. He will thus not

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[221] _Ibid_., p. 40.

[222] C.D. I 2, p. 661 ff.

> allow himself to be disturbed by the questions of minorities or majorities, of success or failure, of the probable or more likely improbable progress of Christianity in the world. As a witness of Jesus Christ, he will simply do--and no more is required, though this is indeed required--that which he can do to proclaim the Gospel in his own age and place and circle, doing it with humility and good temper, but also with resoluteness which corresponds to the great certainty of his hope in Jesus Christ.[223]

3. Preaching as witness. In previous discussion we have had occasion to underline the fact that Barth's concept of preaching places significant emphasis on the witness character of proclamation. Scripture and proclamation as forms of the Word of God are witness or attestation to the Word of God revealed. Both the Bible and proclamation based on the written form of the Word point beyond themselves, and in this their character as witness is established. They are "attestation." Barth writes, "To attest means to point in a definite direction beyond oneself to something else."[224] The emphasis on the witness character of preaching focuses several important issues in Barth's concept of preaching.

The first thing to be said, by way of obvious but needed repetition, is that Barth insists that God is His own self-witness. Prior to any human venture of witness and also in the midst of any such act the fundamental truth centers on the fact that God Himself makes Himself known. He is the living God who as Word of God unveils Himself. The entire third part of the fourth volume of the Church Dogmatics represents a systematic attempt to explore the meaning of God as His own self-witness. There Barth takes up the doctrine of the prophetic office of Christ and the recurring emphasis heralds the fact that in His Risen life Jesus Christ makes Himself known. The third problem of the doctrine of reconciliation focuses on the fact that, ". . . as reconciliation takes place, it declares itself."[225] Previous discussion has underscored this note in Barth's thought. It needs only to be placed at the forefront of the following discussion as reminder that any discussion of the witness character of preaching rests upon the supreme presupposition that Jesus Christ is risen, and as risen and victorious Lord He makes Himself known.[226]

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[223] C.D. IV 3, pp. 918-191.

[224] C.D. I 1, p. 125.

A second significant fact to be marked is the fact that in developing the doctrine of the prophetic office of Christ with its recurring emphasis on the Risen Christ as His own self-witness Barth proceeds to develop the idea of the vocation of man as witness. The counterpoint of the emphasis on Christ as "The True Witness"[227] is the emphasis on the role of the Christian as witness. Barth insists that the Risen Christ ". . . in His prophetic office and work . . . . does not go alone but wills to be what He is and do what He does in company with others whom He calls . . ."[228] The Christian community is called into existence and goes its way in company with its Lord fulfilling the commission to be witnesses. Barth writes,

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[225] C.D. IV 3, p. 19

[226] Cf. the discussion of "The Light of Life," C.D. IV 3, p. 38 ff, and "Jesus is Victor," C.D. IV 3, p. 165 ff.

[227] C.D. IV 3, p. 368 ff.

[228] C.D. IV 3, p. 542.

> . . . as surely as He does not will to tread alone His way as the Proclaimer of the kingdom, so surely they (the Christians) for their part must be with Him, companions of the living One who are made alive by Him, witnesses in His discipleship to that which He wills to reveal to the world as having been effected in Him, namely to the reconciliation accomplished and the covenant fulfilled in Him.[229]

The Church is given a time and a place between the Resurrection and the Parousia, and in this time and place her basic task is that of witness.

A third significant fact to be underscored concerns the context in which Barth discusses preaching in the development of the vocation of the Christian and the Christian community as witness. Part three of the Doctrine of Reconciliation is devoted to the subject "Jesus Christ, The True Witness." As indicated the Christological focus of this volume centers first on the prophetic office of Jesus Christ as His own self-witness. The second part turns to the vocation of man and the work of the Holy Spirit in the sending of the community. The basic vocation of the community in its sending is witness, and the burden of this discussion concerns Christian ethics as determined by the theological reflection on the prophetic office of Christ. Barth contends that the concept of vocation as witness is ". . . the basic concept in the doctrine of the command of God as we return to it in the context of the doctrine of reconciliation. In other words, it will be the controlling principle of the second form of Christian ethics."[230] And here in this context preaching as a form of the witness of the church is seen as a part of the ethical response appropriate to the doctrine of the prophetic office of Christ.

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[229] C.D. IV 3, p. 542.

It can be put in this way for emphasis. In Volume I the discussion of preaching occurs in the context of epistemological inquiry. In Volume IV 3 preaching as witness is discussed in the context of ethical inquiry. Here preaching is seen as a form of ethical action. It is human activity on the part of the church which proceeds from the command of God to witness. The discussion of preaching in this context is not extensive nor does Barth make a major point of the change of context in discussion of preaching. But the shift is there and for our purposes it is important to mark that in IV 3 the action of preaching is included in the context of discussion of ethics.

Barth acknowledges in the forward to the third part of the Doctrine of Reconciliation that the development of the doctrine of the prophetic office of Jesus Christ arises from the quest to ascertain the basic presuppositions which underlie the widespread discussions centering on the Church's concern for missions, evangelism, the work of the laity, the Church and culture, Church and state, etc.[231] His attention is directed to the quite concrete life of the Christian community in the world. His concern is to establish a theological basis for the Church's life in the world, and this he does in seeing the prophetic work of the Risen Christ as the basis for the present action of the Church in all her forms of existing. That emphasis leads him then to posit witness as the basic vocation of the Christian and the Christian community. He writes,

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[230] C.V. IV 3, p. 610 (underlining mine)

[231] C.D. IV 3, p. xi.

> . . . I have been finally compelled to the insight that the confession before men which is everywhere to be accepted and made is grounded in the work of the living Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and therefore does not stand on the periphery but belongs to the centre of the life of the Christian and the Christian community, the problem of witness deciding indeed whether the Christian really is a Christian and the Christian community the Christian community.[232]

The scope of concern in this volume includes more than the concern for preaching, but it definitely includes preaching. In fact, it is instructive to note that in this final volume of the Church Dogmatics preaching is but one form of the commissioned speech of the Church. The focus in the first volume, The Doctrine of the Word of God, was quite deliberately on proclamation in the form of preaching and sacrament. But in the final volume of the Doctrine of Reconciliation there seems to be a more positive evaluation of other facets of the Church's witness as preaching is set along side such things as instruction, theology, worship, evangelism, social action, cure of souls, etc., as forms of the obedient witness of the Christian community. Just what is to be made of this concerns us later. Suffice it to say at this point that while the discussion of witness includes more than witness through preaching, we do gain insights into the nature of preaching in the wider discussion of witness as the vocation of the Christian and the Christian community.

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[232] C.D. IV 3, pp. xi-xii.

In arriving at the conclusion that the problem of witness is decisive in determining whether the Christian is a Christian and the Christian community truly the Christian community Barth makes his way by eliminating several alternative answers to the question of what the vocation of the Christian is. He first sets himself against an answer which he sees as being quite common in our time. Barth characterizes this view in these words:

> Christians are those who, as recipients of the kerygma of the eschatological divine act accomplished in the death of Jesus Christ, recognise, affirm, and grasp within the world the possibility of their own non-worldly being, and therefore transcend and leave behind the world even as they still exist within it. . .[233]

The calling of the Christian man, according to this view, is to live with a freedom to transcend this world. Barth questions whether the dialectic between worldliness and other worldliness can be posited as the basic calling of man on the basis of the New Testament witness as a whole. He is not at all satisfied with this answer.

He next sees a possible answer to the question of vocation in the suggestion that what makes a Christian, and therefore the goal of vocation, is living by a definite ethos. The simplest form of this suggestion is found in the insistence that the Christian is a Christian as he lives by the twofold command to love God and love neighbor. Barth's argument against this position is detailed and along several lines he marks off the limitations of this otherwise attractive suggestion. Manifestly, he sees that according to this view ". . . Jesus Christ would . . . be Lord only in virtue of a formal authority to command certain things without any obligation to disclose their purpose."[234] The Christian ethos would in effect be an end in itself. Such a displacement of Jesus Christ by an ethos will not suffice for Barth.

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[233] C.D. IV 3, p. 558.

Next Barth turns himself in an extended discussion to the suggestion that the vocation of the Christian is the enjoyment of salvation. He acknowledges that the classic answer given to the question of vocation has been defined by many in terms of the Christian being distinguished from others ". . . by the address, reception, possession, use and enjoyment of the salvation of God given and revealed to the world by God in Jesus Christ.[235] Several limitations of this view are detailed. Most importantly, Barth argues that this view has about it an egocentricity which the Biblical records do not sanction. To be sure, there is in the Bible emphasis on the beneficia Christi, but the classic answer gives to this aspect of Christian experience a significance and weight that exceeds the witness of the Biblical record. But further, and this is of major significance for Barth, there is ". . . common to all the biblical accounts of calling that to be called means being given a task."[236] Basic to the existence of the Christian is execution of this task. The classic answer falls short in that it simply does not give adequate room to being called to a task.

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[234] C.D. IV 3, p. 560.

[235] C.D. IV 3, p. 561.

What is the task to which men are called? Barth writes,

> . . . it consists in the fact that with their whole being, action, inaction and conduct, and then by word and speech, they have to make a definite declaration to other men. The essence of their vocation is that God makes them witnesses. . . . He makes them witnesses of His being in His past, present, and future action in the world and in history, of His being in His acts among and upon men.[237]

The vocation of the Christian and the Christian community is obedience to the commission to be witnesses. Barth does not rule out the valid elements in the other answers as facets of Christian existence, but when it comes to the description of the central vocation of the Christian these other answers are surpassed by the commission to witness. He writes,

> Their calling embraces not only the fact that God gives them knowledge concerning Himself and the doing of His will, and that He calls them to this knowledge, but also the fact that He summons and equips them to declare what He has given them to know. In other words, their calling means both that He reveals Himself in His action and also that He summons them into the witness-box as those who know. . . . This is their raison d'etre.[238]

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[236] C.D. IV 3, p. 573.

[237] C.D. IV 3, p. 575.

[238] C.D. IV 3, p. 576.

Barth sees Christian vocation as determined on the one hand by God in his action upon men, and on the other, by the world which stands in need of hearing the declaration of what God has done from the lips and lives of obedient witnesses. He says, "In vocation . . . it is a matter of God on the one side and the world on the other."[239] Thus the vocation of the Christian in the world is witness.

In the time between Resurrection and Parousia the Church in obedience to the commission to witness has been given a share in God's work in the world. In one sense, Barth sees history as that time given to the reconciled people of God for sharing in God's work in the world. He says,

> He has not yet spoken His last and decisive Word because . . . He does not will to be alone or without us, because He does not will to go over our heads, because He wills to give us a share in His work in our independence as the creatures of God summoned to freedom, as those who are justified and sanctified by Him.[240]

It is conceivable, Barth says, that there could have been an order in which there was no time between the beginning and the end, that the Resurrection could have ushered in the final dawn of glory. But, Barth adds, had that been the case ". . . there is no doubt that He would not then have willed a world sharing in His work, a community knowing and confessing Him, and ourselves as His witnesses."[241] Our existence between Resurrection and Parousia is a time when God ". . . willed to have us at His side and in His discipleship in our own free work."[242] The glory and end of the life of Christians consists in our sharing in His work, in being more than mere spectators of what God is doing; of being disciples free in obedient witness.

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[239] C.D. IV 3, p. 576.

[240] C.D. IV 3, p. 332.

[241] C.D. IV 3, p. 332.

As mentioned previously, Barth's scope of concern in discussion of witness as the vocation of man includes the total life of the individual Christian and the Christian community. But the wider scope of concern does include the immediate concern of this essay, namely preaching. Preaching is a ". . . basic form"[243] of the witness of the Church, and an understanding of Barth's concept of preaching requires a grasp of Barth's understanding of the Church's vocation as witness. In the following portion of our discussion we shall seek to apply to preaching per se some of the germane points Barth makes about witness.

One thing to be emphasized again is the fact that the description of preaching as witness does not allow for an automatic or direct identity between the word of preaching and the Word of God. The point has been previously discussed. It is mentioned again here simply to acknowledge that it is the witness character of both preaching and Scripture which establishes both a continuity and discontinuity between the revelation given in Jesus Christ and these two subsequent forms of the Word of God. Witness means that preaching points beyond itself to that quite definite event of revelation in Jesus Christ, and in the act of witness makes present the reality of that revelation. But inasmuch as it is witness it is not the revelation directly. It is testimony, human speech pointing beyond itself. Barth affirms, as we sought to indicate in the discussion of preaching as the integral Word of God, that God does use this fallible human witness to make known hic et nunc the revelation, but this does not give grounds for direct identity. Professor James Smart aptly summarizes Barth's position in saying, ". . . in the church's preaching of the gospel, although the hope that sustains it is that God may speak his word to man by means of it, even in its most successful form it cannot be identified directly with revelation but remains a fallible human witness."[244]

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[242] C.D. IV 3, p. 333.

[243] C.D. IV 3, p. 870.

While writing at great length on the cruciality of the vocation of witness, Barth refuses to reduce the issue of the dynamic of revelation in the present to the question of the validity of the preaching and life of the existing Christian community. He certainly elevates significantly the importance of the calling to witness, but always the basic presupposition of all such witnessing is the continuing self-witness of Jesus Christ in His prophetic office. In his discussion of "The Promise of the Spirit" Barth reckons with the position that between the event of the incarnation and the final consummation in Parousia there is a kind of vacuum, remoto Christo, where the existence of the reality of revelation is dependent upon the existence or non-existence of the witness of the Christian community. Barth characterizes this position as suggesting that in practice Jesus Christ ". . . can exercise His authority and power in this vacuum only in the form of the authority and power of these representatives, and speak His prophetic Word only in the form of their vicarious words."[245] On this score, the time between Resurrection and Parousia is marked by a pause in His life and work. Christ Himself is not personally present and active. This position, according to Barth, would suggest that Jesus Christ

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[244] James Smart, The Divided Mind of Modern Theology, op. cit., p. 190.

> . . . has temporarily reliquished the discharge of His function in favor of the Christian. And as this necessarily means for the Christian that in practice he is pointed to himself, to his own knowledge and self-knowledge, to the freedom thereby indicated, so for the non-Christian it means that to gain his sight and hearing, to become a Christian, he has the not very encouraging prospect of being referred to the witness of Christianity and the impression made by the clarity, cogency and credibility of the institutions and activities of the Church or of various Christian personalities, groups, and movements.[246]

Barth has in mind here that school of thought which centers the understanding of the gospel on the self-understanding of faith. He does not name names in this context, but the clear impression is given that he has in mind Bultmann and his followers who demythologize the work of the Spirit in the present, and leave us solely to the existential understanding of faith. Obliquely, Barth suggests that such a view is implicit in Roman Catholic thought. But it is quite clear that Barth sets himself against such a reading of things. He insists that such a position does not reckon with the reality of the Risen Christ exercising His prophetic office in the present. Barth says,

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[245] C.D. IV 3, p. 347.

[246] C.D. IV 3, p. 347.

> There can be no question of Jesus Christ being even temporarily directed in His absence to let Himself be represented by an honoured Christianity and the holy Church, or of non-Christians having to wait to be impressed by the clarity, cogency and credibility of the witness of Christians. Jesus Christ cannot be absorbed and dissolved in practice into the Christian kerygma, Christian faith and the Christian community.[247]

There is no vacuum in the exercise of Christ's prophetic function. He Himself is fully present and active, and while on the one hand there is a significant elevation of the importance of the witness of the Christian community, there is on the other hand no thought of suggesting that all we have in the present is the witness of the community. Barth persists in affirming that "As Jesus Christ in His today of Easter and of the last day encounters us in our today, He is with us all the days."[248] In this context Barth establishes the grounds for talk of the coming of the Spirit. On the basis of the understanding of the present prophetic work of the Risen Christ we speak of the promise of the Spirit. Barth says, "The return of Jesus Christ in this middle form, in which it takes place here and now, is His coming in the promise of the Spirit."[249] The germane point in this discussion for our purposes centers in the fact that with all the acknowledged importance of the witness of the Christian community, and specifically of preaching as a form of the Word of God in its particular witness, there is no ground for seeing Christian proclamation as substitute for Christ. It is manifestly not the case, on Barth's grounds, that Christ has been reduced to the kerygma of the Church. Preaching is witness, pointing beyond itself, its own self-understanding, its own faith.

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[247] C.D. IV 3, p. 349.

[248] C.D. IV 3, p. 350.

[249] C.D. IV 3, p. 350.

Something of the same point is made as Barth discusses the traditional categories of vocatio immediata and vocatio mediata.[250] He questions the validity of the distinction between the immediate and mediated call contained in the older dogmatics. In these works there was allowance for the fact that in the present there may be exceptional cases of an immediate calling of man by God, a calling not mediated by men. But in reality, Barth suggests, that immediate calling was limited to the calling of prophets and apostles, and since then the calling of man by God has been mediated, first by prophets and apostles, and subsequently by others. This is to Barth a basic flaw in the understanding of calling. The apostles and prophets, and subsequently others, certainly have an indispensable task of mediation, but that task is in reality simply that of witness. The focus of attention is not on their work, bur rather on the work of the living Lord to whom they bear witness. Barth insists, "Even in Holy Scripture as such there is no inherent force. It is wholly and immediately His power and work, if attested by them, He now issues

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[250] C.D. IV 3, p. 514 ff.

His call to others as once He did to them,"[251] Those who are called are indeed taught and instructed by apostles and prophets, but ". . . not even mediately are they called by them."[252] The calling of man is the immediate work of the living God, of the Risen Jesus Christ, of the Holy Spirit. Barth then goes on to apply the same truth to the present witness of the Christian community. He says,

> There is neither an office nor an office-bearer in the Church who can even represent the one Lord who is the living Word of God, and issue a vicarious call. If we are to understand the event of vocation, it is essential that He should be understood immediately, directly, and exclusively as the One who calls, and that all that can and should be accomplished in this regard by the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures, the Church and those active within it as Verbi divini ministri should be seen to consist in confessing Him . . . as the One with whom man has to do in this event, with whom he has perhaps had to do already, and with whom he will certainly have to do in the future.[253]

The implication for preaching is marked. The word of preaching does not serve as mediator for the Word of God. It is, to be sure, a form of the Word of God, but as such it is witness, it points to its Lord, it confesses Him as the Living Lord with whom man has to do. The manifest elevation of the importance of Christian preaching which runs throughout Barth's writing does not sanction such an elevation of preaching that it becomes substitute for Christ, direct mediator of His Word. Rather it is elevated by being witness to Him, elevated by being lifted from its own subjective limitations, elevated by pointing beyond itself to Jesus Christ as Lord.

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[251] C.D. IV 3, p. 515.

[252] C.D. IV 3, p. 515.

[253] C.D. IV 3, pp. 515-516.

The direction of Barth's thought moves from the question of the present life of the Church to the basic presupposition of that life, namely, the continuing activity of the Risen Christ in His prophetic office. That presupposition guards against any arrogance on the part of the Church which might in one way or another seek to set her witness and activity in the place of Christ. But it must be added that this basic presupposition does not give basis for indolence or quietism, supposing that Christ in His prophetic office can well go His way without the witness of the Christian community. It is manifestly clear from all that has been said that there is no room for a line of inaction that suggests that God will do His own work when and where He chooses and therefore our efforts are futile gestures. God may indeed work in His own freedom, but it remains that in His freedom He has called the Christian community to a task. One must recognize fully the primacy of God's action, but Barth adds,

> . . . it is not advisable to try to escape by appealing to the primacy and over-riding importance of what can take place only between God and man and not between man and man. There can be no limiting or contesting his primacy. . . . But it is a matter of confirming this primacy in the fulfilment of the second commandment. As there can be no above without a below, no before without an after, so there can be no divine revelation without human ministry of witness, no history of salvation between God and man without its reflection and repetition in a history between man and man.[254]

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[254] C.D. IV 2, p. 818.

The witness of the Christian and the Christian community may be ". . . secondary, indirect and apparently very broken,"[255] but it is nevertheless established by God as the confirming Word of vital significance in the history of God's present activity among men.

The Christian community has been given a quite definite ministry. As the community of Jesus Christ it exists for the world[256] and its existence for the world consists of its ministry of witness. As Jesus Christ lives in the world in His prophetic office, He is not there alone. Barth repeatedly insists "He is accompanied by the community gathered, built up and sent by His attestation."[257] Let it be noted at this point that while Barth sees the existence of the Christian community rooted in God's love for the world, he makes clear that the witness of the community must be directed not only to the world, but quite concretely to the community itself. He comments on this point, saying, "The same Word which the community has to attest to the world will and must be continually heard afresh by it to its own constant gathering, upbuilding and sending."[258] The Church exists for witness to the world, but its own hearing of the Word is essential for its meaningful life in the world. Barth emphasizes the two-fold rhythm of the Church's life in saying,

> If its inward service is not to become an institution for private satisfaction in concert, or a work of sterile inbreeding, it must

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[255] C.D. IV 3, p. 269.

[256] Cf. C.D. IV 3, p. 762 ff. where Barth details the life of the Church as "The Community for the World."

[257] C.D. IV 3, pp. 830-831.

[258] C.D. IV 3, p. 832.

> accept the priority of its sending to the world, of its task in relation to those without. Yet for the sake of the execution of this task, in order that the missionary community may be the living and authentic Christian community which is able and willing to executve it, its witness must be also directed to its own members.[259]

It is especially important for us to mark this emphasis inasmuch as the discussion of preaching as a form of the Church's witness has as its primary focus the witness to the gathered community of believers.

Before moving to further discussion of preaching as a form of the Church's ministry of witness, let us mark the fact that Barth sees three things as basic to all forms of witness. First, the witness of the Church will be ". . . in all forms and circumstances the declaration of the Gospel."[260] The Christian community cannot produce or reproduce the divine historical fact of God's reconciliation of the world in Jesus Chrsit. Yet it can quite definitely hear the Gospel which has as its content the divine historical fact of revelation and reconciliation, and it can quite definitely declare this gospel with all the means at its disposal. To declare the Gospel means, according to Barth,

> . . . to utter and to cause to be heard in the world, with no less distinctiveness than many other things, and with incomparably greater peace, certainty, freedom, and joy, the grace of God addressed to man as His creature, . . . the act of God in which it took place that He reconciled an otherwise

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[259] C.D. IV 3, p. 833.

[260] C.D. IV 3, p. 844.

> opposing and gainsaying world to Himself, in short, the existence of the living Lord Jesus Christ yesterday, today, and tomorrow as the content of the Gospel.[261]

Such declaration can assume many forms, and all forms, whether of speech or action, have as ". . . the sterling content of witness. . . the simple or varied proclamation: 'Jesus Christ is risen, He is risen indeed.'"[262]

Secondly, the witness of the community in its varied forms is the explanation or explication of the Gospel. On Barth's score, explanation means ". . . in general terms to point to the proper clarity or immanent light of something."[263] This means that the community's task pertains to ". . . explaining and unfolding of the Gospel, in making it intelligible."[264] His concern is that the Gospel should not be put forth in such a way as to imply that some sacrificium intellectus is integral to faith. Barth insists that the Gospel is intelligible and explicable and that its content is rational and not irrational. Thus, to explain means ". . . to trace the points and lines and contours of its content in the relations and proportions in which it discloses and explains itself, and to do so, not with divine skill and power, but with the human skill and power given to the community as the people of God."[265] While there is no diminishing of the lively confidence in the prophetic office of Christ in making Himself known, there is also no diminishing of the lively responsibility of the community of faith in employing all the human skills available in explaining and exploring the meaning of the knowledge given in revelation.

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[261] C.D. IV 3, p. 845.

[262] C.D. IV 3, p. 846.

[263] C.D. IV 3, p. 846.

[264] C.D. IV 3, p. 846.

[265] C.D. IV 3, p. 849.

One might legitimately question how Barth insists that the Gospel makes itself known and at the same time argues for explanation and explication as germane facets of the Church's witness. If the Gospel makes itself known how does the community of faith make it intelligible? In response Barth argues that

> . . . the self-enunciating content of the Gospel does not permit a mere unfruitful acquaintance, i.e., a purely formal and mechanical reception, and therefore a proclamation which may be loud and clear but is empty because it is undeveloped and unarticulated declaration or mere assertion.[266]

Even as the Gospel makes itself known in encounter with the community it demands to be proclaimed accordingly, in such a way that it is understood. Confidence in the self-witness of Christ does not give basis for indolence on the part of the community. The theological assertion that Christ is His own self-witness has as its counterpart the ethical demand that the community is called to corresponding clarity in its human endeavors of witness. In His prophetic office of self-witness Jesus Christ does not will to be alone, but calls and commissions a community of people as His people and gives them a time and a place for their witness which includes the explanation or explication of the Gospel in understandable and intelligible forms.

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[266] C.D. IV 3, p. 847.

Barth is careful to maintain that the essential work of faith and knowledge is not created by man. In a later section of this part of his discussion on declaration, explanation, and evangelical address he states that the occurrence of faith and knowledge ". . . can only be the work of God, of the prophecy of Jesus Christ, of the Holy Spirit."[267] However, he goes on to say, ". . . the Christian community can and should serve God and man by at least calling man to the way of knowledge with its witness, by at least giving an indirect push in the direction of salvation and peace."[268] In its witness in the form of explanation of the Gospel the church is responding in correspondence to the self-witness of Christ in her midst. To refuse the human task of explanation, of tracing the lines and contours of the Gospel made known to the church would be an act of disobedience and would give to the declaration of the Gospel the character of rote and mechanical, and therefore meaningless, repetition. But it remains that through the repeated insistence on the prophetic work of Jesus Christ the church in her witness does not take into her hands the task of creating faith and knowledge of the Gospel as though it were totally dependent upon the success of her witness.

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[267] C.D. IV 3, p. 851.

[268] C.D. IV 3, pp. 851-852.

In the third place, Barth contends that the witness of the community in all its forms is evangelical address, i.e., proclamation and explication in the form of application.[269] Barth's concern here centers on the address of the church to the world in which the Gospel is proclaimed as a significant factor in the life of the world. The declaration of the Gospel is genuine only as the church turns to men in the world and in evangelical address shows that the Gospel has to do with them. For such, the church must know men not merely as a means of determining how best to declare and explain the Gospel, but ". . . to cause to be heard as applying to them the Gospel which they do not know and which is indeed continually new even to the community itself as it declares and explains itself."[270] It is important to mark the fact that in turning to the world in its witness of evangelical address the essential point of contact with men ". . . consists in the fact that God has made and loves them too, that Jesus Christ has died and risen again for them too, and that reception of the Word of God and obedience to it is their first and final destiny too."[271] This means that the witness of the church does not go forward in ". . . the form of bitter and threatening accusation spreading alarm and fear."[272] And more importantly, Barth insists, on the basis of the fact that God manifests His love for all men, the church does not address men

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[269] C.D. IV 3, p. 850.

[270] C.D. IV 3, p. 851.

[271] C.D. IV 3, p. 851.

[272] C.D. IV 3, p. 851.

> . . . as Jews or various kinds of heathen, as atheists, sceptics, or indifferent, as victims of error, superstition or unbelief, nor as total or partial hypocrites they seem to be, but as the people of christiani designati. . .[273]

Barth's doctrine of election in which he sees Christ as the Elect Man for all men is pertinent at this point. Because all men are included in God's reconciliation in Christ the church is not warranted in addressing men as the damned to be snatched from the sea of burning by faith in the Gospel. Rather her address to men reckons with the fact of God's love for them and seeks to reveal that the Gospel is not something that has to do with a special class of so-called religious people. He writes,

> To address men evengelically is to challenge as strongly as possible their illusion that this is something peculiar which applies only to special individuals needing and capable of religion, and to make as clear to them as possible that they have to do with the reality which is the secret of the existence of all men and the whole world, and which as such is directly their own secret and that of their whole life.[274]

Evangelical address, then, seeks to unfold the reality of the Gospel as a significant factor in the life of all men. Barth contends that the world needs just such an appeal. The church in its evangelical appeal cannot create knowledge and faith in the Gospel, but it can in its witness give an "indirect push" in the direction of salvation by addressing men on the assumption that the Gospel with its Good News of reconciliation is valid for all men.

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[273] C.D. IV 3, p. 853.

[274] C.D. IV 3, p. 853.

Such lines of development have caused some to charge Barth with 'universalism.' In the closing section of the first half of the Volume IV 3 of the Church Dogmatics he addresses himself to this question. In discussing the threat of condemnation under which the perverted human situation stands Barth asks, "Can we count upon it or not that this threat will not finally be executed, that the sword will not fall, that man's condemnation will not be pronounced, that the sick man and even the sick Christian will not die and be lost rather than be raised and delivered from the dead and live?"[275] In response to the question Barth contends that we cannot arrogate to ourselves the decision that in the end there will be a universal reconciliation of all men. But he adds,

> . . . there is no good reason why we should forbid ourselves, or be forbidden, openness to the possibility that in the reality of God and man in Jesus Christ there is contained much more than we might expect and therefore the supremely unexpected withdrawal of that final threat . . . . To be more explicit, there is no good reason why we should not be open to this possibility.[276]

And then, in a closing passage reflecting Barth's consistent heralding of the Good News of God's grace for all men, he writes of the possibility of an apokatastasis or universal reconciliation,

> If we are certainly forbidden to count on this as though we had a claim to it, as though it were not supremely the work of God to which man can have no possible claim, we are surely

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[275] C.D. IV 3, p. 477.

[276] C.D. IV 3, p. 478.

> commanded the more definitely to hope and pray for it as we may do already on this side of the final possibility, i.e. to hope and pray cautiously and yes distinctly that, in spite of everything which may seem quite conclusively to proclaim the opposite, His compassion should not fail, and that in accordance with His mercy which is "new every morning" He "will not cast off forever."[277]

Barth will not postulate as theological assertion a universal reconciliation, but his appropriation of the grace of God will certainly encourage him to hope and pray for it for he sees the grace of God in Jesus Christ in such proportions that it is the basic reality of the life of all men.

The evangelical address of the church is grounded, on Barth's score, in just such an idea of the magnitude of God's grace and it is the task of the church to address all men on the basis of the manifest significance of the Word of God in Jesus Christ as an essential facet of the reality of their life. That is the "secret" of the existence of all men.

In the discussion of specific forms of speech and action which compose the ministry of witness, Barth lists twelve basic forms of witness,[278] namely (1) the praise of God, (2) preaching, (3) instruction, (4) evangelism, (5) mission (specifically to the non-Christian world), (6) theology, (7) prayer, (8) the cure of souls, (9) personal examples of Christian life and action, (10) diaconate, (11) prophetic action and (12) fellowship. It is beyond the scope of our concern to explore how each of these is developed. It is, however, our task to turn our attention to the nature of preaching as a form of the Church's witness.

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[277] C.D. IV 3, p. 478.

[278] C.D. IV 3, p. 865 ff.

Barth's eye in this context turns specifically to the event of preaching as it occurs in the gathered assembly of Christians. Here attention focuses on that which goes under the name 'sermon.' In earlier discussions Barth has the sermon *per se* in mind as he speaks of proclamation, but it remains that the bulk of the discussion speaks of preaching in a rather abstract fashion. Proclamation as a form of the Word of God assumes the definite character of preaching and sacrament. But concrete discussion of the actual event of preaching as it takes place Sunday by Sunday seldom comes into clear focus in the earlier volumes of his *Church Dogmatics*. But here, in discussing preaching as a form of the Church's witness, the actual event is very much in mind. In this setting several interesting ideas are put forward.

First, it can be marked that Barth sees preaching as addressed primarily to the gathered community of believers. He sets off his discussion of preaching in terms of that ". . . explicit proclamation of the Gospel in the assembly of the community, in the midst of divine service . . . ."[279] There may be a direct or indirect hearing by the world in such an event, but the primary focus centers on preaching done to the believing community.

Secondly, it can be underscored that Barth sees as the "issue" of preaching the fact that ". . . the community, and with it the world, should remind itself or be reminded explicitly of the witness with which it is charged, that it should find reassurance as to its content, that reflected in it Jesus Christ Himself should speak afresh to it, that it should be summoned afresh to His service in the world."[280] Put in this way, the decisive issue in preaching is concerned primarily with what happens in the gathered community. Both explicitly and implicitly Barth focuses the basic issue of preaching in terms of what is accomplished in the company of Christians. There are indeed other forms of witness where the primary focus centers on the world. But here, where the specific activity of the pulpit is in view, the world is in view only secondarily. That does not imply that preaching, and likewise the liturgical assembly of the Christian community, are unworldly, solely spiritual, or unconcerned with the world. But it does imply that the specific concerns of evangelism and mission assume other forms than that of preaching. Or put in another way, the concern of preaching _per se_ is not in the first instance that of evangelism or mission. Preaching normally takes place in the context of the baptized community. The issue is a fresh hearing of the Word by which it lives, a "reassurance" as to the content of the Gospel, a new or renewed hearing of the summons to witness.

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[279] C.D. IV 3, p. 867.

The third emphasis of the discussion of preaching in this context emphasizes that preaching is _action_. To be sure, words, or speaking, are basic to this action, but Barth sees such speaking not simply as speech, but decisively as action. Preaching as the work of human speech is human action.[281] Barth recognizes that in the various forms of the Church's ministry of witness both speech and action are involved. But he refuses to assign to one or the other of these forms a superior position. In discussing the necessity of both speech and action in the Church's witness, Barth writes,

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[280] C.D. IV 3, p. 867.

> No matter how we understand speaking or proclamation on the one side and acting or healing on the other in the ministry of the community, and no matter what the community may think it is commanded to do and may actually try to fulfil along these two lines, there can be no doubt that in the light of its origin, of the Given of its task who is also its content, its ministry and witness have always to move along these two lines: not merely along either the one or the other, but along both. . . . It is not as though it were concerned with something different in the two, but wholly with the same thing though in different ways in both. For its speech is also action and its action speech.[282]

To be sure, speech and action are distinct forms. It is the case that Barth does argue that speech precedes action,[283] but this does not give license to assign to speech a higher value and a lower to action. The community must first speak, but it must then with the same emphasis and seriousness act, and in doing both it recognizes that its speech is action, and its action speech. It is important to underline this line of thought inasmuch as there exists in some quarters an idea that speech is "mere speech," and that what is demanded is action. Thus social action begins to displace the cruciality of the spoken word. Barth will have none of this! The Church's speech is decisively also action!

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[281] C.D. IV 3, p. 870.

[282] C.D. IV 3, p. 863.

[283] C.D. IV 3, p. 863.

The fourth emphasis in the discussion of preaching as a form of witness centers on the fact that ". . . in all true preaching there is made a new and specific reference to that which. . . . has been accomplished by God and is manifested to be real and true. True preaching is, in fact, the preaching of Jesus Christ, of the radical alteration of the situation between God and man, between heaven and earth, as it has been effected in Him."[284] This, of course, is an expected emphasis. But it has several important consequences.

For instance, inasmuch as true preaching is the preaching of Jesus Christ it is distinguished from all other forms of human communication. On the one hand, it is quite concretely a human action of speaking. But because of its peculiar function it is a quite distinct form of human communication. It is thus guarded against becoming general talk or special talk chosen only at random.[285] Preaching has as its presupposition the self-witness of Jesus Christ and as its content that decisive act that has occurred in Him. It is because of this that Barth is reluctant to carry on the discussion of preaching primarily in terms of "communication." He acknowledges the importance of careful choice of the language to be employed in preaching, and says there is no special language to be employed. The only words available for the preacher are the manifestly worldly or secular vocabulary common to our life in the world. But the communication of the gospel cannot be mastered by mastering the techniques of communication common to other forms of human verbal intercourse. Barth is often criticized at this point. For instance, Paul Van Buren, writing in an introduction to a series of Barth's essays, suggests that Barth has made too neat a separation between the *how* of language and the *what* of language. He asks, "By refusing to consider the way we use words today and the categories with which we think, has he (Barth) not shut us out of his conversation?"[286] Or again, it can be stated that one point of departure between Barth and Bultmann and the post-Bultmannians is just at the juncture where the question of language enters. Bultmann desires to "demythologize" Biblical language and substitute for it the vocabulary of existentialism which he assumes adequately conveys the content of the gospel for modern man. But Barth fears that such a binding program of demythologizing sets too rigid limits for the proclamation of the gospel and perhaps assumes that the basic issue in preaching centers on adopting the right language. To focus the issue there seems for Barth to deny the reality of the self-witness of Jesus Christ, and further threatens to set up a prior self-understanding which becomes determinative for what can be said, and thus potentially threatens to produce a disabling reduction of the Gospel. Perhaps Barth does not go as far in the discussion of language as many desire, but that is not simply the product of traditionalism or obscurantism on Barth's part. Rather it derives from his consistent conviction that Jesus Christ in His own self witness and in His own work accomplishes communication. And it also derives from the conviction that preaching is not simply another form of human communication, but because of its peculiar content, namely Jesus Christ, it is itself a peculaiar form of communication.

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[284] C.D. IV 3, p. 868.

[285] C.D. IV 3, p. 868.

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[286] Barth, *God Here and Now*, *op. cit.*, p. xv.

It can be added that because true preaching is the preaching of Jesus Christ, obedient to a specific commission, it is not simply general talk on random subjects chosen by the preacher. On this score Barth's conception of preaching differs radically from so-called "topical" preaching in the sense of the preacher's choosing some self-appointed topic and expounding thereon from the resources of his peculiar wisdom, genius, or bias. Barth insists that preaching must never become ". . . an expose in lecture form of such psychological, sociological, ethical and political learning and convictions as the preacher may . . . have."[287] When the echoes of Barthian theology first began being sounded on this side of the Atlantic, Wilhelm Pauck suggested that what Barth was saying would find little hearing in America inasmuch as American preaching was characteristically preaching on religious topics with only a casual or superficial relation to the Bible.[288] Barth replies to Pauck with the suggestion that even in America ". . . it will surely happen some day that 'religious topics' get for some so stupid and stale that from that dim recollection (of what preaching ought to be) a clear one may arise once again."[289] Preaching on general religious topics with primary recourse to the preachers religious genius is manifestly not responsible fulfilment of the commission given to preaching to bear witness to Jesus Christ.

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[287] C.D. IV 3, p. 869.

[288] Wilhelm Pauck, Karl Barth, Prophet of a New Christianity? (New York: Harper & Bros., 1931), p. 99.

It is, of course, conceivable that topical preaching can point beyond itself to Jesus Christ, but Barth goes on to insist that preaching which is the preaching of Jesus Christ ". . . takes place in concrete connection with the original witness concerning Jesus Christ and therefore the kingdom of God, namely, with the Old and New Testaments."[290] In that sense, then, preaching is communication of the Biblical message. Thus Barth sets himself against even the best of topical preaching which, to use Pauck's characterization, exhibits only a casual or superficial relation to the Bible. However, it is important that what Barth says about the Biblical nature of preaching be clearly understood. Some see in Barth's emphasis a kind of wooden Biblicism.[291] It can hardly be argued, however, that Barth would endorse such. While insisting that preaching rests on Biblical studies, Barth goes on to insist that it is different from them. He writes,

> Shaped always with special reference to a special part and aspect of the biblical witness, nourished by its "text," it is preaching of Christ, of the kingdom, of salvation, of grace. On the basis of listening to the declaration of

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[289] C.D. I 1, p. 292.

[290] C.D. IV 3, p. 868.

[291] Cf., for instance, Merrill Abbey, The Word Interprets Us (Nashville: Abindgon, 1967), p. 16 ff.

> Scripture, preaching is an independent declaration and explanation of the Gospel, an independently ventured evangelical appeal. It is not more than simple exposition of Scripture. It is not better. But it is certainly different. . . . preaching is a special ministry which can only be neglected or disrupted if it seeks to be only or even predominantly exposition. Preaching has to speak out of the Bible, but not concerning it.[292]

The difference between preaching and exposition seems for Barth to reside in the fact in preaching ". . . Much that is indispensable to exposition as such, and therefore to the background of preaching has thus to be withheld from preaching, or to be introduced into it only by way of brief indication."[293] Detailed considerations of various historical, literary, and archeological data must certainly occupy the attention of the preacher, but Barth insists, ". . . they must be left to one side in the actual event of preaching, where the concern is direct communication and address and where they would only disturb and distract both the preacher and the listening community."[294] Barth's concern is that preaching should not proceed deviously, but should rather come straight to the point in the clear affirmation of the Yes of God uttered in Jesus Christ. Barth's sermons serve as documentation of this concern. In them one finds little attention to the background of Biblical exposition, but rather a straightforward utterance of the significance of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

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[292] C.D. IV 3, pp. 868-869.

[293] C.D. IV 3, p. 869.

[294] C.D. IV 3, p. 869.

Indeed, there is often a confusing simplicity in Barth's sermons. One is involved in conclusions that have behind them detailed exegetical study and sophisticated theological conclusions with no apparent indication of the route followed to the conclusions. For instance, the sermon "Look Up To Him" is preached on the text from Psalm 34:5, "Look up to him, your face will shine, and you shall never be ashamed." The sermon begins with these words,

> My dear brothers and sisters, 'Look up to him!' This is what we commemorate on Ascension Day: the urgent invitation, the permission and the command, the freedom we enjoy as Christians and the obedience that is expected from us to look up to him, to Jesus Christ, who lived for us, died and rose again. He is our Saviour who watches over us like an older brother watches over his younger brothers and sisters, yet in his protection is also their example and their master.[295]

Here the jump from an Old Testament text to a radical Christological affirmation is made with no suggestion whatsoever as to the route followed by the preacher. There is no question concerning the "original intent" of the Psalmist. Rather the text is simply placed in a large Christological context, and the sermon proceeds along the lines indicated, developing each phrase of the text in similar fashion. Barth doubtless would not argue that his particular homiletical pattern be followed, but he does insist on the one hand on the inescapable relation of preaching and Biblical witness, and on the other hand, on the distinct difference between Biblical exposition, per se, and preaching. Preaching, with its specific reference to Jesus Christ, arises from Biblical exposition but has as its burden not the details of exposition but the pointed evangelical address which is integral to the declaration and explication of the Gospel.

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[295] Karl Barth, Deliverance to the Captives (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), p. 44.

The final thing to be said about Barth's discussion of preaching as a form of witness is that as such preaching is an indispensable form. Where preaching is missing, the community is deficient in its ministry of witness. Barth writes on this point:

> Poor community whose ministry is deficient in this basic form! The fault might lie with the speakers who ought to be dedicated to the discharge of this ministry or with the hearers who ought to be actively willing and able to support this ministry. But either way, if this ministry is indeed lacking, then there is specific need of the reformation in the head and members which is always needed by the community: and the prayer must go out with particular urgency that the Lord will send forth laborers, or better, wiser and more cheerful laborers, into His vineyard.[296]

By way of reflection on the emphasis made in discussing preaching as a form of the Church's multiform ministry of witness it is interesting to note the following things.

First, it is striking that the discussion of preaching in this context makes no explicit reference to preaching as a form of the Word of God. The idea is implicit in several of Barth's affirmations, but nowhere do we find specific expression that the preaching discussed assumes the explicit character of Word of God. Interestingly, also discussion of the Lord's Supper and baptism as a form of the witness of the community is subsumed under the discussion of fellowship as a form of witness. Baptism and Lord's supper in this context, are ". . . significatory actions in which men, instead of being merely alongside or even apart, both come and are together. They are thus actions which establish fellowship."[297] The first volumes of the Church Dogmatics revolve around the doctrine of the three-fold form of the Word of God, and as noted, in that discussion the Word of God proclaimed assumes the forms of preaching and sacrament. But that formulation of things does not appear to dominate the discussion of the forms of witness in the ministry of the Church in the last volume of the Dogmatics. It would not do, however, to try to argue for a "new" Barth emerging in this final volume. The particular formulation may change, but the basic structure is still quite apparent. What then are we to make of the different way of discussing preaching as a form of the Church's witness?

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[296] C.D. IV 3, p. 870.

That question leads to a second reflection. It appears that in the final volumes of the Dogmatics there is a more positive evaluation of forms of the Church's witness other than preaching and sacrament *per se*. In the first volume of the Dogmatics Barth discusses various forms of language found in the Church and contends that such things as man's language addressed to God in worship, the activity of helpful solidarity towards external needs of human society, instruction of youth, and theology are not proclamation.[298] He acknowledges that on principle we cannot deny the possibility that such language in these forms may indeed, in God's own freedom, become proclamation.[299] But having made clear that speaking the Word of God ". . . cannot be limited by our intention to speak the Word of God,"[300] and having insisted upon the freedom of God in speaking for Himself, Barth goes on to insist that the special commissioned proclamation is preaching and sacrament.[301] These two forms of the Church's life are the focus of attention in discussion of the Word of God Proclaimed. It is germane to cite again the definition of proclamation given in this early context. Barth writes,

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[297] C.D. IV 3, p. 901..

[298] C.D. I 1, pp. 54-55.

> Proclamation is human language in and through which God Himself speaks, like a king through the mouth of his herald, which moreover is meant to be heard and apprehended as language in and through which God speaks, and so heard and apprehended in faith as the divine decision upon life and death, as the divine judgement and the divine acquittal, the eternal law and the eternal gospel both together.[302]

And according to the specific commission given the two normative forms of such proclamation are preaching and sacrament.

However, in Volume IV of the Dogmatics some modification in the form of a more positive view of other forms of witness seems to occur. There the basic vocation, the commission, given to the Church is defined in terms of witness to Jesus Christ. And in fulfilment of this vocation the Church's life assumes the forms detailed above. Barth says that we can and must ask about the different forms employed in witness,

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[299] C.D. I 1, pp. 58-59.

[300] C.D. I 1, p. 58.

[301] C.D. I 1, p. 60.

[302] C.D. I 1, p. 57.

> . . . the specific forms of the witness of the community, which, conditioned and demanded by its nature as declaration and explanation of the Gospel in the world and evangelical address to it, will characterize it in every age and place and in all circumstances if it is the work of obedience, and which cannot indeed be lacking in so far as they are generally posited by God.[303]

He remarks that the various forms of witness are marked by a unity and a plurality. Their unity consists in the fact that all forms are forms of witness to Jesus Christ, and their plurality consists in the differentiation in form. There is speech and there is action and while each form is distinct, there is a basic unity in their nature as witness. As indicated earlier Barth does not assign to one form a superiority over the other. He acknowledges that speech precedes action, but it is not thereby primary and action secondary.[304] All the given forms of witness bear the basic characteristics of declaration, explanation, and evangelical address of the Gospel. It would seem that in this context Barth has given to forms other than preaching and sacrament the character of fundamental importance in the proclamation of the Gospel. All the forms discussed share in the basic epistemological function of leading to active knowledge, presumably the knowledge of the Word of God. Barth writes,

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[303] C.D. IV 3, p. 859.

[304] C.D. IV 3, p. 860 ff.

> The first if not the only thing in its (the Church's) witness is the ministry of the viva vox Evangelii to be discharged voce humana in human words. It is its declaration, explanation and evangelical address with the lips. This does not mean, however, that a higher value is to be assigned to speech and a lower to action. The burden of both the speech and the action of the community is that men are called to knowledge, yet not to empty but to active knowledge.[305]

Perhaps the shift of emphasis can be traced to certain shifts that have taken place in Barth's thought. The framework of Volume I, The Doctrine of the Word of God, grows out of Barth's early conviction that the state of theology, among many other things, was marked by a depreciation of preaching. He sets out, as indicated earlier, to put the principles of Christian preaching at the forefront of his dogmatic formulations. The first Christian Dogmatics began with the existential event of preaching. Modifications were made in the Church Dogmatics but the focus of attention is still very much on the event of preaching, and the concern is how man knows God. This leads to the formulations of the three-fold form of the Word of God. Subsequently there is a sutble shift to a more Christocentric emphasis in the Doctrine of God, the Doctrine of Creation, and the Doctrine of Reconciliation. The basis for this shift is present in the Doctrine of the Word of God. The Word of God Revealed, the first and basic form of the Word, is equated with the event of revelation in Jesus Christ. But as the shift to Christocentricism occurs there is an accompanying shift in the description of preaching. Mark it! The basic affirmations concerning the Word of God proclaimed are not abandoned.

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[305] C.D. IV 3, p. 863.

But neither can one argue that the three-fold form of the Word of God is as decisive in the last three volumes of the Dogmatics as in the first. By the time Barth turns to the specific discussion of preaching in the last part of Volume IV the Christocentric emphasis takes form in the doctrine of the prophetic office of Jesus Christ, which is the specific exposition of the reality of the resurrection. Jesus Christ in His risen life is His own self-witness. And now the human action which proceeds from the truth of Christ as prophet is witness. (The emphasis has of course been made in earlier volumes.) And that witness of the community of Christians which serves as declaration, explanation, and evangelical address of the Gospel assumes various forms. Preaching is still a basic form, an indispensable form without which the Church stands in need of definite reformation. But the witness of the community of Christians goes forth in many different forms and no superiority is claimed for one form over the other. It can be argued that if in Volume I there was a certain inflation of the importance of preaching, in Volume IV there is no diminishing of the importance of preaching, but an elevation of the cruciality of other forms of witness.

The third basic reflection to be made about the way preaching as witness is formulated in the final volume of the Church Dogmatics concerns the previously discussed fact that the event of preaching is seen here as a form of ethical action. This fact is repeated here for emphasis. Though Barth makes no elaborate case for the significance of this shift in context in discussing preaching, it seems to me that a very important cue is given here, one that needs to be explored further and emphasized carefully. The discussion of preaching in Volume I of the Church Dogmatics occurred in the context of epistemological concerns. The discussion of preaching in IV 3 occurs in the context of ethical concerns.

E. Summary statement. We have sought to explore the question of how Barth comes to the manifest focus on preaching in his dogmatic endeavors and further what basic affirmations about preaching are made. We noted several factors in his thought and development which led to the concentration on preaching. These we discussed under the heading of the existential concern for preaching, the influence of the Reformation, the forgetfulness of orthodoxy, Neo-Protestantism's waywardness, the rejection of natural theology, and the impatience with historical criticism. We then turned to the development of dogmatic thought concerning preaching which explored the doctrine of the three-fold form of the Word of God. We traced the way in which preaching is correlate of revelation. Then we sought to summarize the major emphases made by marking Barth's emphasis on preaching as an integral form of the Word of God, preaching as obedience to a commission, and preaching as witness.

Now, in conclusion, we are led to make the following statements concerning Barth's conception of preaching.

1. Preaching fulfils a basic epistemological function in the life of the Christian Church in the world. God reveals Himself, and a correlate of that revelation is the Word of God proclaimed.

2. Preaching exists in integral relation to the Biblical witness. True preaching is Biblical preaching. It does not look for its content to the experience of the preacher, nor to the genius of the

preacher in various areas of human thought and experience, nor to general religious topics, nor to man and his quite apparent problems, nor to theology. Its task ~~is to~~ bear witness to Jesus Christ on the basis of the witness of prophets and apostles in the canon of Scripture.

3. Preaching goes forth on the basis of God's commission to proclaim the Gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Preaching does not proceed from the desire of the preacher to utter things wise or unwise, religious or secular, pious or impious. Preaching occurs because in the event of revelation in Jesus Christ there is a commission that the Church should speak a definite Word.

4. Preaching fulfils an ethical function in the life of the Church. It is ethical action. As Jesus Christ in His prophetic work makes Himself known, He at the same time calls into being a community of Christians and commands them to exist as witness to Himself. In fulfilment of the command given preaching is appropriate ethical action, one form of the Church's multiform witness.

CHAPTER III

B. THE FOCUS ON PREACHING IN BULTMANN

The preacher who turns to the writings of the New Testament scholar Ruldolf Bultmann will discover throughout his writings a continual reference to "what happens in preaching." In a quite surprising way Bultmann seems to hang the reality of the Christian faith today on what takes place in the preached word. For instance, in discussing the "Salvation-Occurrence" in the Pauline corpus Bultmann asserts, ". . . the salvation occurrence is nowhere present except in the proclaiming, accosting, demanding, and promising word of preaching."[306] Such words are typical of the kind of statement one finds in Bultmann in many different contexts and invite closer investigation on the part of the practical theologian and preacher. To such we now turn our attention.

By way of forward to the discussion of Bultmann it is interestint to note that the concentrated emphasis on the centrality of preaching does not arise from the kind of existential involvement with the task of preaching discovered in Barth. Bultmann has not avoided the preaching office, but certainly the influences shaping his discussion are of a different origin than those which confront the man in the pulpit facing the congregation as a present and awesome reality. This is particularly noticeable as one reads the brief autobiographical statement by Bultmann found in two English publications.[307] It is obvious in this statement that Bultmann's world has been the scholar's world. His life has been spent primarily at the professor's lectern and not in the pulpit. He relates his various stages of development in terms of the influence of first one and then another contact with scholar or book. A scholarly footnoting of the journey of the mind characterizes the autobiographical account. In addition to primary intellectual movements of his life Bultmann notes that he belonged to the Confessing Church in Germany from the time of its founding, and interestingly characterizes his part in this movement as endeavoring ". . . to see that free scholarly work retained its proper place within it in spite of reactionary tendencies."[308] He adds further the fact that he ". . . never directly or actively participated in political affairs."[309] These comments are cited simply as reminder of the fact that in seeking to grasp what Bultmann has to say about preaching we are dealing with a perspective of a particular type. Previously we noted that Barth's focus on preaching was strongly influenced by his existential involvement as a pastor facing the preacher's specific problem--the sermon. We note here that Bultmann's focus on preaching arises from the extensive concerns of a New Testament scholar.

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[306] Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, Vol. I (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 302.

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[307] Rudolf Bultmann, Existence and Faith (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), p. 283 ff., and Kegley, The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, op. cit., p. xix ff. The statement was written in 1956 and is identical in the two volumes except for an additional concluding paragraph in the later volume cited.

[308] Kegley, ibid., p. xxi.

[309] Ibid., p. xxii.

This fact only serves to highlight the pertinence of the question, "How is it that a leading New Testament scholar places such significant emphasis on the act of the Church's preaching?"

In seeking to answer such a question one is confronted with various facets of Bultmann's work that lead to the concentrated focus on preaching. The fruits of his work as an historical-critical scholar contribute to his focus on kerygma, the preaching of the early Christian community as the basic data present to us in the New Testament. Certain fruits of his theological orientation as a Lutheran contribute to his concentrated emphasis on soteriology and subsequently to preaching as the locus of the salvation occurrence. Elements of his concept of revelation are decisive in highlighting the role of preaching in the event of revelation. His philosophical studies, notably the study of the early Heidegger, give strong impetus to his concentration on existence and preaching as a factor in shaping modern man's self-understanding. It is difficult to assign priority to any one of these factors. It is apparent that they all contribute to the self-evident focus on preaching.

It is possible to gain a cue concerning the route of Bultmann's development by taking note of a half-page statement in which Bultmann chronicles the books which have been decisive in his evolving thought. In the article entitled "Milestones in Books"[310] he catalogues several books that were of "decisive significance" in his life. The first two books mentioned are by Weizacker and Wrede and their importance is noted in terms of the way they opened for Bultmann the discipline of historical-critical study. Weizacker is cited for the influence in development of the historical-critical method, and Wrede leads Bultmann further in this path and to the conclusion ". . . that narrated history must be preceded by an understanding of the narrators of it, and thus that no psychological interpretation of the history of Jesus is possible without a psychological understanding of the evangelists."[311] John Weiss in his work Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes is credited with opening Bultmann's eyes to the 'eschatological' character of the preaching of Jesus. Hermann's Ethik was decisive in recognizing ethics ". . . in the relation of person with person in history."[312] Barth's Der Romerbrief is cited as making decisively clear

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[310] Rudolf Bultmann, "Milestones in Books," The Expository Times, LXX (January, 1959), 125.

> . . . (1) that the essence of the Christian faith does not consist in an attitude of the soul, but in its relation to its object, God's revelation; and (2) that the interpretation of the text presupposes a personal relation to the matter of which the text speaks.[313]

And finally Bultmann acknowledges the influences of Heidegger's Sein und Zeit in enabling him to attain

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[311] Ibid., p. 125.

[312] Ibid., p. 125.

[313] Ibid., p. 125.

> . . . a deeper understanding of the historical character of human existence, and thereby at the same time the conceptual framework in which theology too can operate in order to bring faith to appropriate expression as an existential attitude.[314]

In the study of Bultmann one can discern the recurring echoes of the influences cited, put together in Bultmann's thinking in his own unique and creative way. For our purposes it can be noted that each of the influences mentioned has bearing on what Bultmann says about preaching.

As indicated in the initial chapter of this work it is my judgement that the substance of Bultmann's position is consistent from the earlier years to his latest writings. He explores new themes and traces various problems in his books and essays, but the strcuture of his thought undergoes no major revision. Consequently, in the following discussion quotations will be taken from writings from various periods of his life without an attempt to establish some marked difference between the 'early Bultmann' and the 'later Bultmann'.

I shall seek to organize the understanding of Bultmann's focus on preaching from the center of his concept of revelation and then show how other factors contribute to his concept of preaching. In what Bultmann says about revelation we see a decided concentration on preaching. From Barth he learned the fact that all is related to the object of faith, God's revelation. Bultmann, of course, develops his concept of revelation along different lines from those of Barth. Nevertheless, it remains that there is a kinship at this central point.

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[314] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

A. Revelation. Perhaps the best place to seek an understanding of Bultmann's concept of revelation is the 1929 essay entitled, "The Concept of Revelation in the New Testament."[315] While other writings take up the subject, this essay provides the basic contours of Bultmann's thought on revelation.

In this essay Bultmann begins by insisting that one must seek to clarify the understanding of revelation that is presupposed when the idea is discussed. A clear answer depends on a clear understanding of the question being asked. He then asserts that generally we understand revelation to be ". . . the disclosure of what is veiled, the opening up of what is hidden."[316] This is further differentiated in two ways: 1. Revelation is the communication of knowledge by the word. In this instance it is information through which we become acquainted with something that we were previously unacquainted with so that henceforth it is known. 2. Revelation is an occurrence that puts me in a new situation as a self. In this case there may be the possibility of knowledge being communicated, but basically the issue is not the mediating of information about some state of affairs, but the revealing word is itself the state of affairs.[317] Bultmann sees these two alternatives as decisive in understanding revelation and one must ask the New Testament which meaning is intended. Is revelation the communication of knowledge about the previously unknown, or is it an event, an encounter, in which the self is challenged and has opened up the possibility of seeing things differently so that now, because of the event of the word, there is the new possibility of authenticity?[318]

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[315] Bultmann, Existence and Faith, op. cit., p. 58 ff.

[316] Ibid., p. 59.

[317] Ibid., p. 59.

Bultmann develops the argument that it is the second alternative that the New Testament sets before us. Revelation consists not in acquiring new knowledge, but in the word of the event of Jesus Christ which now puts the hearer in a new situation in understanding himself. Revelation is not concerned with a set of facts about God, a statement of doctrines which are to be accepted, but rather is concerned with ". . . nothing other than the fact of Jesus Christ."[319] In the fact of his coming Jesus Christ has not opened up a path to new knowledge, but has instead opened up the path to new life. The issue in revelation is not the substantiation of a set of historical facts and subsequently the assertion of a new knowledge on the basis of these facts. That is to misinterpret the intention of the New Testament. The central issue is that man in his existence lives an inauthentic life in his attachment to the world and his own resources. Life, in this sense, is veiled.[320] But Jesus Christ reveals life! His existence opens the possibility of authentic existence as he manifests the reality of grace and openness to the future. Revelation is thus an occurrence that puts man in a new situation as a self. In Jesus man is challenged to faith and in that faith is the possibility of authentic existence.

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[318] At this point it is pertinent to mark the comment of James Smart concerning Bultmann's two alternative ideas of revelation. He writes, "A third possibility, which would combine the two in some degree, holding revelation to be an occurrence that puts me in a new situation as a self and in doing so brings me knowledge not only of myself but also of God, is not allowed to appear, although the reading of the New Testament would certainly suggest it as a possibility. Thus, one must say that in the formulation of the preunderstanding the dice are loaded in the direction of existentialism." James Smart, The Divided Mind of Modern Theology, op. cit., p. 185.

[319] Bultmann, Existence and Faith, op. cit., p. 75.

Bultmann goes on to insist that life is not an objective condition in which we find ourselves, but is rather a mode of being that we lay hold of in faith.[321] The basic issue is not new knowledge, but new self-understanding in faith. The focus of attention is not on objective doctrines but on the subjective authenticity of our being. In this light, for instance, he discusses the meaning of sin. He asserts,

> The primal sin is not an inferior morality, but rather the understanding of oneself in terms of oneself and the attempt to secure one's own existence by means of what one himself establishes, by means of one's own accomplishments.[322]

The real issue of sin is forgetting that man is a creature. The issue at stake in forgiveness of sin is not the remission of moral failures, but rather the reproducing of the original relation of creation, God as Creator, man as creature. What then is revealed? Bultmann puts it this way:

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[320] Ibid., p. 75.

[321] Ibid., p. 80.

[322] Ibid., p. 81.

> . . . man misunderstands himself and puts himself in the place of God. And every man comes out of a history governed by this misunderstanding. He comes out of a lie; he is determined by the flesh whose power he cannot break. Were he to imagine that he could break it, he would assume that he does have himself in his own power after all and would thereby merely repeat the primal sin. There is another possibility _only if it is given to him_ to come into his present form somewhere other than from a lie and from sin. And that this possibility _is_ given is what is proclaimed in the message of Christ.[323]

Revelation consists of the new possibility of understanding oneself as creature before the gracious Creator. Revelation is thus an occurrence that puts the hearer of the proclamation in a new situation.

To put the question again, what has been revealed?, we come to this answer in Bultmann.

> What, then, has been revealed? Nothing at all, so far as the question concerning revelation asks for doctrines... . . On the other hand, however, everything has been revealed, insofar as man's eyes are opened concerning his own existence and he is once again able to understand himself. It is as Luther says, 'Thus, in going out of himself, God brings it about that we go into ourselves; and through knowledge of him he brings us to knowledge of ourselves.' . . . Man learns to understand himself in the light of the revelation of redemption . . . namely, as God's creature who is limited by God and stands under God's claim, which opens to him the way to death or to life.[324]

This revelation is not received as a world-view which one grasps, possesses, and applies, but it ". . . addresses the individual as an existing self."[325] The emphasis is distinctly on the fact that in revelation man understands his now, the moment of the present, as that now is qualified by the word of proclamation. The issue is not the communication of something that happened in a certain place and at a certain time, but is rather the question of what has occurred to the person being addressed *now*. Thus faith does not hinge on the knowledge of some fact within the world nor upon the willingness to hold some dogma to be true. Rather faith is ". . . the obedience that obeys God not in general or *in abstracto*, but in the concrete now."[326] Further, faith is not some good work which man accomplishes, but is the ". . . momentary act in which he lays hold of himself in his God-given freedom. And the man of faith understands himself only in such an act."[327]

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[323] _Ibid._, p. 83.

[324] _Ibid._, pp. 85-86.

Along these lines Bultmann seeks to establish the fact that revelation is an act of God, an occurrence, and not the communication of supernatural knowledge. Revelation is manifestly not concerned with doctrines to which one gives assent, but rather with life now. The knowledge given in revelation is knowledge of ". . . my immediate now, in which and for which the word of proclamation is spoken to me."[328] While maintaining the priority of God's revelation in addressing man's questions and questionableness, Bultmann sees as invalid the idea that revelation is the supernatural arrangement for communicating remarkable doctrines.

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[325] *Ibid.*, p. 86.

[326] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

[327] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

[328] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

Bultmann insists that the New Testament speaks to just the situation he has described. The idea of revelation presupposed by the New Testament closely parallels Bultmann's second alternative. As the answer to the question concerning the communication of doctrines the New Testament does not suffice. That is clearly not the question which the New Testament itself wants to address, according to Bultmann.

It is now for us to turn specifically to the implications for preaching involved in such an idea of revelation. Bultmann himself repeatedly highlights the function of preaching in his idea of revelation. Already references have indicated how present proclamation takes a central position in revelation. In addressing himself to the "how" of revelation, Bultmann concludes that the proper order is that of word and faith. That is, revelation in Jesus Christ is not visible as a cosmic event nor as an inner experience. Rather, the salvation-occurrence ". . . is revealed as proclamation, in the word."[329] Bultmann asserts that proclamation is to be designated as revelation. The life of Jesus is manifest in Paul to the extent that he preaches and that preaching is responded to in faith. Bultmann says that in his preaching, ". . . Paul has become Christ himself for his hearers--not because he is deified and is gazed upon by them as pneumatic, but because he preaches to them."[330]

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[329] Ibid., p. 76.

[330] Ibid., p. 76.

The basic character of the ministry of Paul is that of unveiling through preaching. Like Christ, the preaching apostle must himself be understood as one who reveals life. The past event of Jesus Christ as the revealer of life is made present in the continued preaching, and only so is that past event revelation.

Bultmann summarizes his argument by saying that what the New Testament understands as revelation can only become clear when two series of statements are maintained and related to each other. These statements are (1) life is revealed, Christ is revealed; (2) the word of proclamation and faith are revealed.[331] The significance of these statements is explained by Bultmann in these words:

> The first series makes clear that revelation is not illumination or the communication of knowledge, but rather an occurrence, while the second series makes just as clear that this revelation-occurrence cannot be a cosmic process which takes place outside of us and of which the word would merely be bringing a report . . . Thus revelation must be an occurrence that directly concerns _us_, that takes place in us ourselves; and the word, the fact of its being proclaimed must itself belong to the occurrence. The preaching is itself revelation and does not merely speak about it, so that it mediates a content that one can understand or to which he can relate himself through knowledge and thereby 'have' the revelation. If preaching communicates a content, it at the same time addresses us; it speaks of our consciences, and whoever refuses to let himself be addressed likewise does not understand what is communicated.[332]

Along these lines Bultmann places the event of preaching at the very heart of his idea of revelation as present occurrence. Preaching is indeed the present occurrence of revelation. In this sense, also, preaching is 'eschatological event.' It is the event in which Christ is proclaimed not in terms of cosmic event, but in terms of personal encounter which brings dependence on this world to an end.

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[331] _Ibid._, p. 78.

[332] _Ibid._, p. 78.

The correlation of revelation and preaching is established along lines different from Barth, but the emphasis is unmistakable. Bultmann insists that it is meaningless to talk simply of something which happened in the past. The significance is in the present. It is meaningless to talk of cosmic event. The significance is personal. It is meaningless to talk about doctrines to be accepted. The significance is the understanding of existence. And the way in which such concerns come into the present is through preaching. Preaching does not accomplish these significant things ". . . by communicating something about the past, by reminiscing, but rather by presenting it in the form of address."[333] That is to say, the significance of Christ as salvation event is evident not in terms of an argument or doctrine about what happened between God and Jesus on the cross as some cosmic transaction. Rather the significance of Christ as salvation event is in the fact that he is preached as such, he is present in the sermon as address which radically challenges present self-understanding. Bultmann asserts, "As the preaching itself belongs to the fact of salvation, so also is this fact not what it is without the preaching."[334] Revelation as a reality, revelation as something significant in the present, encounters man today in the word of preaching.

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[333] Ibid., p. 79.

[334] Ibid., p. 79.

In another context Bultmann states the paradox of the Christian faith by insisting that faith hinges on an event that happened in the past, but that past is meaningless except as present event in preaching. He writes,

> The "demythologized" sense of the assertion that Jesus Christ is the eschatological phenomenon that brings the world to its end is precisely this, that Christ is not merely a past phenomenon, but the ever-present Word of God, expressing not a general truth, but a concrete message, that Word that destroys and in destruction gives life.
>
> The paradox of the Christian faith is precisely this, that the eschatological process which sets an end to the world became an event in the history of the world, and becomes an event in every true sermon, and in every Christian utterance.[335]

It is not within the scope of this work to go into detailed criticism of Bultmann's concept of revelation. That there are pertinent questions to be asked goes without saying.[336] It is our intention, however, to underline first, Bultmann's central concern that faith is related to its object, God's revelation in Jesus Christ, and secondly, his insistence that preaching stands at the heart of revelation as present reality. Robert Funk aptly comments that basic to Bultmann's concerns is the question: How can an event of the past, i.e., God's act in Jesus Christ, continue to be eventful? And he characterizes Bultmann's answer to the question as insisting ". . . that the event of the past which is decisive for man's salvation is made present in the proclamation."[337] In Bultmann the preacher is confronted with one who proposes an integral correlation of revelation and preaching.

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[335] Hans-Werner Bartsch, Kerygma and Myth, Volume II, op. cit., p. 193.

[336] Numerous writers devote themselves to criticism of Bultmann's idea of revelation. Special attention is called to the following works for more detailed criticism of Bultmann at this point. H. P. Owen, Revelation and Existence (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1957); John Macquarrie, The Scope of Demythologizing (New York: Harper and Bros., 1960); Hermann Diem, Dogmatics (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1959); James Smart, The Divided Mind of Modern Theology, op. cit.; Schubert Ogden, Christ Without Myth (New York: Harper and Bros., 1961); David A. Cairns, A Gospel Without Myth? (London: SCM Press, 1960); Charles W. Kegley, ed., The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, op. cit.

By way of summary it is perhaps useful to underscore five basic characteristics of Bultmann's concept of revelation. In this summary dependence on the work of H. P. Owen is acknowledged.[338] Bultmann himself comments that Owen's work ". . . describes impartially and accurately my understanding of revelation."[339]

First, the basic axiom is that the subject and object of revelation is not a series of propositions or body of dogma; it is neither more nor less than the living God Himself.[340] In this Bultmann rejects the view which he assumes to be the Catholic one, and that of orthodox Protestant thought also, that revelation consists in the communication of a body of knowledge or doctrines. The basic content of revelation is the divine life which Christ conveys. Here Bultmann is at one with much thought in contemporary theology. It is in the following characteristics that Bultmann's distinct emphases are present.

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[337] Robert W. Funk, Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 23.

[338] Cf. H. P. Owen, Revelation and Existence, op. cit., for a longer treatment of the subject. A synoptic view is present in Owen's article, "Revelation," in Kegley, ed., The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann op. cit., p. 41 ff. It is to the latter work that we can turn for the basic outlines of the summary given below.

[339] Kegley, ed., The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, op. cit., p. 261.

[340] Ibid., p. 42.

Second, God's act of revelation is at the same time concealed in the events that mediate it.[341] God is at one and the same time the hidden and revealed God.[342] He is known only to the eyes of faith. It should be marked at this point that Bultmann's emphasis here leads him to join Barth in the rejection of natural theology. The working of God's hand is not evident to man apart from the acknowledgement of faith in the revelation of Jesus as this revelation confronts man in the word of preaching.[343] God is present 'incognito.' Behind this assertion there is the insistence upon "the infinite qualitative difference between God and man" as emphasized by Kierkegaard. Schubert Ogden argues that "the infinite qualitative difference" is basic in understanding Bultmann. Ogden writes,

> . . . we may lay it down as a rule that one ought never to suppose he has correctly understood anything that Bultmann says, as regards either the method or the content of his

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[341] Ibid., p. 42.

[342] Cf. especially the essay "Concerning the Hidden and the Revealed God" in Bultmann, Existence and Faith, op. cit., p. 23 ff.

[343] Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, Essays (London: SCM Press, 1955), p. 90 ff.

> theology, until he is able to see it as permitted or required by this basic dialectic.[344]

James Smart would seem to concur with this judgement, suggesting that Bultmann has absolutized as a principle Kierkegaard's "infinite qualitative difference."[345] There are those who argue that to read Bultmann solely from this principle is amiss.[346] It remains, however, that this dialectic, if not central, is at least crucial for an understanding of Bultmann. Bultmann desires to avoid pointing to some cause-effect relation in the world with God designated as "cause."[347] God is totally other, and as such is the hidden God who does not manifest Himself in such a way as to allow man to catalogue his actions ". . . like the work of an artist or an engineer."[348] The work of God cannot be isolated and presented as an 'object' for observation. James Smart argues that for Bultmann the "hiddenness of God" is so basic as to prevent any talk about God. When Barth suggests that the hiddenness of God is overcome in Jesus

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[344] Quoted from Ogden's introductory essay in Bultmann, Existence and Faith, op. cit., p. 14.

[345] James Smart, The Divided Mind of Modern Theology, op. cit., p. 227

[346] Cf., for instance, Carl Braaten in Carl Braaten and Roy Harrisville, Kerygma and History, op. cit., p. 13.

[347] Cf. for instance, Bultmann, Existence and Faith, op. cit., p. 291. "The historical method includes the presupposition that history is a unity in the sense of a closed continuum of effects in which individual events are connected by the succession of cause and effect." God is not some third factor who breaks into this closed continuum as cause.

[348] Hans Werner Bartsch, ed., Kerygma and Myth (New York: Harper and Bros., 1961), p. 121.

Christ, so that we can in effect now talk about God, Bultmann answers that he cannot understand what Barth means by "incarnation" and talk of God in and of Himself. Smart contends that the division of modern theology hinges on just this point, namely, "Shall theology be based on the word to which faith responds or shall it be based on the faith which responds to the word?[349] Because Bultmann has absolutized the hiddenness of God, he can only talk of the faith that responds to the word, and not the God who is the object of faith.

The third characteristic of Bultmann's idea of revelation is that revelation occurs in an 'encounter' with the Word of preaching.[350] Already previous discussion has highlighted this factor in Bultmann's thought. Preaching does not simply point to revelation, but as it mediates an encounter in its word of address, it is itself revelation. Bultmann's consistent concern is to maintain revelation as an act in the present, and the proper occasion for such revelation is the accosting word of preaching. The word of preaching is the specific word that makes the salvation-occurrence a present 'eschatological event.'

The fourth characteristic of revelation points to the fact that the proclamation of the gospel would not be complete--could not indeed occur--unless it met with self-knowledge or self-understanding in the hearer.[351] Obedience to the Word of God means that the hearer must see it in relation to his own existence. Revelation is the unveiling of life. It comes into our present not as a theory about the universe but rather as a disclosure of our standing before God in a particular and unique situation.

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[349] Smart, The Divided Mind of Modern Theology, op. cit., p. 228.

[350] Kegley, ed., op. cit., p. 43.

[351] Ibid., p. 43.

Finally, as apparent throughout previous discussion, God's revelation is always in the present.[352] To seek to locate revelation as an act in the past is to remove it from the sphere of self-understanding now. For this reason Bultmann despairs of the attempt to construct the divine significance of the 'historical Jesus.' He definitely asserts that Jesus is the unique revelation of God, but is quite content with the simple "that" of Jesus. To many the simple "that" of Jesus represents gross oversimplification. Even Bultmann's disciples seek to overcome what they consider to be weakness in Bultmann by launching a "new quest for the historical Jesus." Bultmann contends that he is misunderstood at this point, and suggests that interpreters do not take seriously enough ". . . my thesis that the Christian faith asserts that an historical event--that is, Jesus' launching of his ministry, his activities, and his fate--is the eschatological event."[353] Nevertheless, Bultmann's emphasis on the present as the moment of revelation seems to obscure the significance of Jesus as the locus of revelation. He wants to assert the latter, but refuses to moderate the insistence on the present as the decisive moment in revelation. He attempts to hold the two together by asserting that as Christ is preached He is the Revealer. Historical research cannot establish the validity of the claim made for Jesus as the Revealer. Only in the kerygma is He known as the Christ, and for that reason only as He is preached today as the eschatological event of God's salvation is He significant as Revealer.

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[352] Ibid., p. 44.

[353] Ibid., p. 261.

Bultmann's theology is characterized by a definite emphasis on the event of revelation, but revelation as distinctly defined along the above lines. Let it be underlined, further, that Bultmann's idea of revelation leads to a marked correlation of revelation and preaching.

There are certain other factors which contribute to the particular concentration on revelation and preaching in Bultmann and to these we now turn our attention.

B. Historical-critical study of the New Testament. Basic to an understanding of Bultmann's focus on preaching is an understanding of his perspective as a historical-critical scholar. It is as New Testament scholar that Bultmann has done his major work. His early work in the field of form criticism and the publication of The History of the Synoptic Tradition[354] in 1921 established him as a pre-eminent New Testament historian. His subsequent Theology of the New Testament[355] marks his place as a leading New Testament theologian. Bornkamm acknowledges that Bultmann's theology must be understood, at least in part, from the standpoint of the movement of historical-critical theology.[356] At first sight this may seem to be simply a descriptive statement of general interest. But on second consideration it is to be noted that it is his work as a New Testament historical-critical scholar that is decisive in his subsequent emphasis on preaching, and is thus quite pertinent to the purposes of our inquiry.

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[354] Rudolf Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition (New York: Harper & Bros., 1963).

[355] Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, op. cit.

As a form critic Bultmann affirms that what we have in the New Testament is by no means an historical account of the life of Jesus, but rather the kerygma about Jesus. His careful study of the New Testament documents leads him to conclude that ". . . the interest of the gospels is absolutely different from that of the modern historian. . . The gospels . . . proclaim Jesus Christ, and were meant to be read as proclamations."[357] In turning to the gospels, he asserts, "It is perfectly clear that it was not the historical interest that dominated, but the needs of Christian faith and life. One may designate the final motive by which the gospels were produced as the *cultic* . . . ."[358] The consequence of such conclusions is that the message of Jesus is the *presupposition* of New Testament theology, and that it is not the preaching of Jesus nor the historical data of his life with which we have to deal in the New Testament. Rather, Bultmann insists, ". . . theological thinking--the theology of the New Testament--begins with the kerygma of the earliest Church and not before."[359] Along these lines, all too familiar in contemporary theology, Bultmann proceeds to make clear that we cannot go behind the kerygma of the early Church to a supposed historical portrayal of what actually happened or what indeed Jesus himself said. On the one hand, this is clear enough. We are dealing in the gospels with compositions of the early Church which do bear the indelible stamp of the several believing writers. But Bultmann radicalizes this assertion. From the kerymatic materials which make up the New Testament the historian can establish by the canons of historical science nothing other than the "that" of Jesus. The "old" quest for the historical Jesus in the 19th century had ended in bankruptcy, and Bultmann accepts this not as a negative, but rather a quite positive fact. His studies of the New Testament not only confirm the futility of the "old" quest, but assume that such is indeed quite illegitimate. The documents of the New Testament do not yield conclusions for the historian; they are rather kerygma of the believing community. Bultmann even demurs from the attempt of his students who set out in a "new" quest of the historical Jesus.[360] In an essay in dialogue with the "new" quest Bultmann insists, "The decisive thing is simply the 'that.'"[361] He argues against the effort to show that the kerygma presupposes not only the 'that' but also the 'what' and the 'how' of the historical Jesus and further questions the attempt to indicate that in Jesus' activity in word and deed the kerygma is already contained in nuce.[362]

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[356] Kegley, ed., *op. cit*., p. 4.

[357] Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Kundsin, *Form Criticism* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962 (original copyright 1934)), p. 70.

[358] *Ibid*., p. 64.

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[359] Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 3.

[360] Cf. James Robinson, The New Quest of the Historical Jesus (London: SCM Press, 1959); Ernst Fuchs, Studies of the Historical Jesus (London: SCM Press, 1964); Gunther Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth (New York: Harper & Bros., 1961); Gerhard Ebeling, Theology and Proclamation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968); (and for general overview of the discussion) Carl Braaten, History and Hermeneutics (esp. Chapter III) (Philadelphia, Westminster, 1966). (The literature on the "new quest" is certainly more extensive than indicated in the above listings, but these are cited as locus of the basic lines of the discussion.)

Basic to Bultmann's disinterest in establishing the 'what' and the 'how' of the historical Jesus is recognition that first, he does not believe it can be done according to the canons of historical study, and second, it is not legitimate from the standpoint of the demands of faith. On the first score, his own studies have convinced him that the picture of Jesus in the New Testament is so completely invested with the faith of the early Church that it is impossible to get behind the kerygma to a supposed historical kernal, other than the mere "that" of Jesus. But even more decisively, faith cannot rest on the conclusions of the historian. Faith is the response to the word and to attempt to secure faith with historical certainty is to destroy faith as faith. Bultmann's combination of the historical-critical method and the radicalizing of the Reformation principle of sola fide produce in him firm insistence that everything rests on the relation of Word and faith. Ebeling characterizes Bultmann's position in these words:

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[361] Carl Braaten, and Roy Harrisville, ed., The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 20.

[362] Ibid., p. 21 ff.

> Bultmann's position in regard to the historical Jesus is determined by theological considerations based on his concept of kerygma, according to which, speech about God's saving act can only find its proper place within the relation of Word and faith. So any attempt to 'search behind' the kerygma for its legitimation, for a proof of its truth, is rejected with the utmost severity as being against the nature both of the kerygma and of faith. Thus in Bultmanns' interpretation the Word is, in the first place, characterized as the authority which demands decision, and faith as obedient acceptance. Any attempt to give grounds for the kerygma by demonstrating its origins in the historical Jesus, would, for Bultmann, be to break out of the relationship between Word and faith and so to lose sight of the kerygma. . . . 'It is precisely because it cannot be proved that Christian proclamation can ensure itself against the objection that it is nothing but mythology.'[363]

Gogarten insists that the issue at stake in Bultmann's exegesis, couched as it is in what appears to be a pervasive historical scepticism, is not the destruction of faith, but rather the establishment of faith that is faith. He insists that what is at stake in Bultmann's disinterest in establishing an historical basis for faith is in reality the following of the sola fide principle of Luther to its logical conclusion.[364]

The insistence in this line of thought is that faith for Luther is not faith in historical fact, but faith in the Christ who is present in the preached Word. Bultmann argues that this is just what is involved in the preaching of the early Church. He writes,

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[363] Gerhard Ebeling, Theology and Proclamation, op. cit., p. 37. Cf. also Ebeling's essay, "The Significance of the Critical Historical Method for Church and Theology in Protestantism" in Gerhard Ebeling, Word and Faith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 17 ff., where Ebeling argues at some length along the lines of Bultmann.

[364] Friedrich Gogarten, Demythologizing and History (London: SCM Press, 1955), p. 82 ff.

> If it is true that the kerygma proclaims Jesus as the Christ, as the eschatological event, if it claims that Christ is present in it, then it has put itself in the place of the historical Jesus; it represents him.[365]

The issue of faith is thus not its relation to the historical Jesus but rather its relation to the preached Christ, the word of preaching. To ask for more than that is to go beyond the relation of Word and faith, indeed to destroy the nature of faith as faith.

Hermann Diem points out that what has occurred is Bultmann's conversion of his negative conclusions from historical-critical study into a quite positive value. Diem says that Bultmann

> . . . tries persistently to get behind the kerygma of the text by critical methods, in order to establish what in fact happened, and he does so with the same resources . . . as the whole of historical-critical research before him. But he does not do so--and here is the decisive difference--in order to base faith on historical conclusions attained, but, on the contrary, in order to make impossible any such basis of faith, and thus he has greater scope for the most radical results than any of his predecessors. Always for him, faith must be made insecure and all historical foundations withdrawn from it. That historical criticism . . . might have another positive significance, is not apparent.[366]

Diem goes on to quote Erwin Reisner who says, "Since the world began and certainly since Adam ate of the Tree of Knowledge, it has never yet occurred to anyone to investigate in order to become uncertain."[367] But it nevertheless remains that Bultmann does indeed see the positive side of negative historical conclusions. And the positive value points to the significance of preaching for Bultmann. Jesus becomes significant for us not through the findings of historical research, but rather through the word of preaching. On Bultmann's score, even if one is able to establish various historical certainties there is real question as to what has been gained. Faith is an event in the present if it is to have any significance at all, and that present significance of faith is to be found in the immediate response, not to historical certainties about past events, but rather to the word of preaching as an event in the present.

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[365] Braaten and Harrisville, ed., The Historical Jesus and The Kerygmatic Christ, op. cit., p. 41

[366] Hermann Diem, Dogmatics (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), p. 90.

One basic factor contributing to Bultmann's positive evaluation of negative historical conclusions is employment of the existentialist distinction between _Historie_ and _Geschichte_. _Historie_ is the description of the facts lying "back there" which can be objectively verified. It is the impartial and neutral cataloguing of what can be said to have happened in the past. But even when the data of _Historie_ has been established, the fundamental question of the significance of that _Historie_ for man's existence today has not been established. And that, for Bultmann, is the decisive issue. Thus the designation, _Geschichte_, is employed to point to significant history. _Geschichte_ has to do with the phenomena that concern men today existentially, the things that make a demand upon man for response and commitment now.[368]

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[367] _Ibid._, pp. 90-91.

It must be acknowledged also that Heidegger's discussion of history stands behind Bultmann's concentration on the distinction between Historie and Geschichte. Macquarrie points out that while ". . . he (Bultmann) does not explicitly mention Heidegger's philosophy of history, it is not difficult to show that some such understanding of history underlies his interpretation of New Testament theology."[369] Heidegger's study of history is quite involved, but the basic thrust seems to be that the

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[368] Bultmann acknowledges a debt to the idea of history found in R. G. Collingwood in forming his own understanding of history. Collingwood insists that the actions of human beings that have been done in the past are the object of history. There may be certain outside events with which the historian must begin his investigation, but the study cannot end there. The main task of the historian is to think himself into the action, to discern the thought of its agent. He cannot do this in the way that the natural scientists operate, but he must understand the actions by reenacting the process of thought. In this way the knowledge of history is at the same time self-knowledge. It is the self-knowledge of the historian's own mind as the present revival and reliving of past experiences. The value of history lies in the fact that it teaches us what man has done and thus what man is. Collingwood concentrates on the historicity of the human being, and emphasizes that every now, every moment, in its historical relatedness has within itself a full meaning. Such a past offers to the present the problems which demand solution and development. Bultmann adds certain existentialist dimensions to Collingwood's ideas, but nevertheless finds basic cues from Collingwood. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, History and Eschatology (New York, Harper & Bros., 1957), p. 130 ff.

[369] John Macquarrie, An Existentialist Theology, op. cit., p. 164.

> . . . lessons of history, as we call them, may be understood as simply the understanding of authentic possibilities . . . which were once actually open in an existentiell situation, and which are still repeatable and so present.[370]

Macquarrie sees such an idea of history operative in Bultmann's demythologizing program where the insistence is on the interpretation of the mythical element in the New Testament, not the elimination of it. Macquarrie suggests that

> . . . the problem of demythologizing might be expressed as the problem of disentangling the primary historical form from the secondary historical in the New Testament. The primary historical consists of possibilities of existence which are repeatable, present to me today as they were present to others in the past. The central theme of the New Testament is such a possibility--the possibility of forgiveness and new life which God offers to men in Christ. It is that in the New Testament history which is significant for the existence of modern man, that is to say, a present possibility of decision for him.[371]

In attempting to discover the "primary historical form" Bultmann's work is definitely positive, in spite of the abundant scepticism on the level of the "secondary historical form" concerning what historians as scientists can discover about actual happenings.

Bultmann's concept of history and the results of such for interpretation of the New Testament have become the focus of much debate. It is significant that the substance of the debate with Bultmann in theology has shifted from "demythologizing" to the question of

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[370] *Ibid.*, p. 164.

[371] *Ibid.*, p. 165.

"dehistorizing" the gospel.[372] Carl Braaten, for instance, says, "The only profoundly serious objection to Bultmann's theology, in my opinion, is its acceptance of a divorce between history and kerygma."[373] Alan Richardson pointedly criticizes Bultmann's treatment of history, alleging that there is a basic dualism in Bultmann's approach. On the one level, according to Richardson, Bultmann makes it ". . . very clear that he still adheres to the positivist conception of the nature of history which dominated the religiongeschichtliche Schule of his youth and with which he has worked as a New Testament critic throughout his life."[374] On the other level, Bultmann turns to an existentialist concept of history. Such a basic dualism pervades Bultmann's whole approach. Hugh Anderson in acknowledging the basic dualism suggests that

> . . . we can say even now that it is not necessary to suppose that Bultmann was forced to his existentialist attitude toward history by the negative conclusions of his historical researches in Christian origins. Operative in his environment all along were other conditioning factors, aside from his work as New Testament critic, that influenced him toward his existentialist view.[375]

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[372] Cf., for instance, Braaten and Harrisvile, ed., Kerygma and History, op. cit., and Braaten and Harrisville, ed., The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ, op. cit., for various discussions of the issue.

[373] Carl Braaten, History and Hermeneutics, op. cit., p. 40.

[374] Alan Richardson, History Sacred and Profane (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), p. 143.

[375] Hugh Anderson, Jesus and Christian Origins (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 29.

It is not within the scope of our interest to pursue at length the various responses to Bultmann's concept of history. We can, however, affirm that his work as historical-critical scholar is one decisive factor, among others, which has led to his central emphasis on what happens in preaching. His negative historical conclusions have contributed to the repeated insistence that the issue of faith rests upon response to the preached word.

The basic issue comes to expression in one of Bultmann's replies to his critics in the demythogizing debate. Bultmann writes,

> Our radical attempt to demythologize the New Testament is in fact a perfect parallel to St. Paul's and Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone apart from all works of the Law. Or rather, it carries this doctrine to its logical conclusions in the field of epistemology. Like the doctrine of Justification it destroys every false security and every false demand for it on the part of man, whether he seeks it in his good works or in his ascertainable knowledge. The man who wishes to believe in God as his God must realize that he has nothing in his hand on which he can base his faith. He is suspended in mid-air, and cannot demand a proof of the Word which addresses him. For the ground and object of faith are identical. Security can be found only by abandoning all security, by being ready~~,~~ as Luther put it, to plunge into the inner darkness.[376]

C. *Bultmann's Lutheranism*. The preceding quote from Bultmann gives a hint of the fact that one decisive factor in understanding his emphasis on preaching resides in certain distinctive Lutheran emphases that recur in Bultmann's theology. Various interpreters point to the marked Lutheran characteristic of Bultmann's thought. For instance,

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[376] Bartsch, *Kerygma and Myth, op. cit.*, pp. 210-211.

Karl Barth in his essay, "Bultmann - An Attempt to Understand Him,"[377] pursues several possible lines of interpretation of Bultmann, and then concludes by commenting, "Let me boldly suggest that the nearest solution will be that Bultmann is simply a Lutheran - sui generis, of course."[378] Barth details the close affinities of certain of Bultmann's concerns with those of Luther and Melancton, and his dependence on Hermann, Tholuck, Ritschl, and Kierkegaard, all of whom are Lutherans. Barth warns, " . . . those who throw stones at Bultmann should be careful lest they accidentally hit Luther, who is also hovering somewhere in the background."[379]

Carl Braaten points to the work of Gerhard Gloege who elucidates the way in which Lutheran emphases are radicalized in Bultmann.[380] As reported by Braaten, Gloege's argument is that the basic hermeneutical principles guiding Bultmann's exegesis operate in the Lutheran structure of thought. Gloege sees in Bultmann's distinction between mythology and kerygma the basic motif of Luther's distinction between law and gospel. He asserts that Bultmann inquires into the intention of mythology to discover the kerygma just as Luther inquired into the meaning of the law to set off the gospel. "Both of them were thoroughly governed by the criterion of 'was Christum treibt.'"[381]

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[377] Bartsch, Kerygma and Myth, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 83 ff.

[378] Ibid., p. 121.

[379] Ibid., p. 123.

[380] Braaten and Harrisville, ed., Kerygma and History, op. cit., p. 13.

[381] Ibid., p. 13.

Gloege offers criticisms of Bultmann, but even this is kept within the Lutheran dialectic of law and gospel.[382]

Roman Catholic critics of Bultmann reflect perception of the fact that in dealing with Bultmann they are dealing with basic motifs of the Lutheran Reformation.[383] Bornkamm acknowledges that Catholic critics ". . . are surprisingly ready and able to understand Bultmann's theological concern and to recognize that he has consistently carried on the Reformation heritage, even though from the Catholic viewpoint he has carried this ad absurdum."[384]

It is not the intention of this work to explore in detail the subject of Bultmann's Lutheranism. It is pertinent, however, to underscore, in addition to the already mentioned law-gospel dialectic, two particular issues which contribute to Bultmann's concentration on preaching.

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[382] It should be marked at this point that Bultmann views the significance of the Old Testament for the Christian Church in terms of the law-gospel dialectic, and in this alleges to take his cue from Luther. Bultmann brackets the whole Old Testament as law. There are germane questions about this procedure as a valid interpretation of Luther which go beyond the concerns of this work, but it is pertinent to mark this Lutheran bias in Bultmann's interpretation of the Old Testament. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, "The Significance of the Old Testament for the Christian Faith" in Bernard W. Anderson, The Old Testament and the Christian Faith (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

[383] Cf. Rene Marle, Bultmann et L'Interpretation du Nouveau Testament (Paris: Aubier, 1956); L. Malevez, The Christian Message and Myth (London: SCM Press, 1958).

[384] Kegley, ed., The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, op. cit., p. 17.

First, it should be recognized that Bultmann's pervasive concern is to discern 'what preaches Christ.' His stance as a Lutheran theologian leads him to repeatedly focus the issue on the question of preaching Christ as Lord and Saviour. This should be obvious enough, but it is the case that certain critics of Bultmann miss just this distinctive note. For instance, Schubert Ogden can charge that Bultmann does not carry his demythologizing project to its logical conclusions, which in Ogden's view would mean 'dekergymatizing' the gospel.[385] Ogden accepts as Bultmann's first principle the assertion that the Christian faith must be interpreted exhaustively and without remainder as man's original possibility of authentic historical (Geschichtlich) existence as this is clarified by an appropriate philosophical analysis. Then Ogden asserts that Bultmann's second principle is that Christian faith is actually realizable only because of the particular historical (Historich) event in Jesus of Nazareth, which is the originative event of the church and its distinctive word and sacraments.[386] It is Ogden's contention that the two principles are inconsistent and that for the sake of the logical consistency of Bultmann's program the second principle must be abandoned. Buri and Barth make a similar argument, so Ogden alleges.[387] The alleged inconsistency in Bultmann leads to a basic frustration of Bultmann's insistence on demythologizing, according to Ogden. To be coherent Bultmann must deny the uniqueness of the event of Jesus Christ, in essence, abandon the kerygma of authentic existence through faith in Jesus Christ.

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[385] Schubert Ogden, Christ Without Myth, op. cit., esp. p. 111 ff.

[386] Ibid., p. 112.

[387] Ibid., p. 111.

There are various criticisms that can be offered concerning Ogden's suggestions, but the most decisive criticism is that Ogden seems to reflect a basic confusion concerning Bultmann's intentions in listing the principles of Bultmann's thought in the particular order employed. According to Ogden's arrangement, for the sake of demythologizing and existentialist interpretation, the first principle, Bultmann must abandon the kerygma, the second principle. This, it seems to me, represents a basic misunderstanding of Bultmann. If one can reduce Bultmann's principles to two, which in itself is a doubtful undertaking, it would seem that Ogden's order of the principles would have to be reversed. Bultmann makes clear again and again that the first issue is the reality of Jesus Christ as the eschatological event, and this is the unique word proclaimed in the kerygma. It is to make the scandal of Jesus Christ as the saving word clear that Bultmann embarks on the program of demythologizing. Cited below are a few lines from the conclusion of the programmatic essay on demythologizing, but it should be recognized that the entire essay asserts as the first principle the kerygma which arises from the event of Jesus Christ. Bultmann writes,

> The agent of God's presence and activity, the mediator of his reconciliation of the world unto himself, is a real figure of history. Similarly the word of God is not some mysterious oracle, but a sober, factual account of a human

> life, of Jesus of Nazareth, possessing saving efficacy for man . . . . All these assertions are an offense, which will not be removed by philosophical discussion, but only by faith and obedience.[388]

Whatever else may be said by way of criticism of Bultmann's demythologizing project, one thing is clear: Bultmann's intention is to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. This is the first principle, and if alterations in the program are to be sought it is not at this point, as Ogden would seem to suggest it should be. The thing to be underscored is that at a very crucial point Ogden seems to misunderstand Bultmann.[389]

Carl Braaten rightly pinpoints Ogden's misunderstanding of Bultmann writing,

> A more complete misunderstanding of Bultmann could not be imagined. If Bultmann's real intention and chief concern is over a dialectical theory of God and the world, and Christology enters in as a misplaced afterthought, no serious theologian would have to waste two minutes on Bultmann *qua* theologian. . . . But theologians have taken Bultmann seriously now for several decades because of his clear intention to explicate the meaning of the New Testament kerygma that Jesus is Christ and Lord, and the goal of his interpretation is homiletically oriented.[390]

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[388] Bartsch, *Kerygma and Myth*, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

[389] For a germane critique of Ogden's argument on the inconsistency in Bultmann cf., Thomas Oden, "The Alleged Structural Inconsistency in Bultmann," *The Journal of Religion*, LXIV (July 1964), 193 ff. Oden argues that Ogden fails to see Bultmann as both existentialist and Lutheran, both Heideggerian and kerymatic theologian. He further argues that Ogden's interpretation of the so-called emerging consensus of opinion concerning Bultmann, a statement of which is crucial for Ogden's thesis, is a product of Ogden's imagination rather than a precise reading of the criticisms.

[390] Braaten and Harrisville, ed., *Kerygma and History*, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

The crucial fact to be reckoned with lies in the fact that with all the questions about demythologizing, existentialism, historical scepticism, or whatever else one may want to list in either a positive or negative vein concerning Bultmann, one thing remains: Bultmann, consistent with his Lutheran heritage, keeps a central eye on the question of 'what preaches Christ'.

It is for this reason that both theologian and preacher need to take Bultmann seriously. His major problem is not existentialism, mythology, doctrines, history, nor modern man. Bultmann's major 'problem' is Jesus Christ, and it is the attempt to understand him today that pervades all that Bultmann undertakes. Marcus Barth refers to the alleged inconsistency in Bultmann, but insists that this is cause for taking Bultmann seriously. He writes,

> Isn't Bultmann inconsistent by speaking of an act of God and by making the kerygma the only meeting place of God and man? . . . There is a basic inconsistency in Bultmann's system itself and in the way by which he is attempting to carry out his program. But it is precisely this contradiction or incongruity which reveals that he is a real theologian--a man who, despite his reason and knowledge and creative powers, acknowledges himself to be fundamentally disturbed, limited, checked, and inspired by Somebody who is beyond man's control, definition, and sophistication and by a deed which never can be fully explained, mastered, or communicated by the sole thoughts and words of man. Bultmann has to be heard and discussed as a Christian scholar and as a teacher of the Church, not in spite of, but just because of, his inconsistency.[391]

Prior to the attempt to understand Bultmann as an existentialist or an historian, he must be understood as a Christian. In repeated contexts Bultmann argues as he does in an article concerning genuine preaching, insisting that preaching cannot simply give a story of Jesus' life and deeds, but rather, "Genuine preaching preaches him as the end of the world, when it preaches him as Lord."[392] Bultmann invites attention not just as an existentialist, but as a Lutheran existentialist with a distinct emphasis on *sola Christus*.

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[391] Marcus Barth, "Introduction to Demythologizing" The Journal of Religion, XXXVII, No. 3 (July 1957), 155

A second major contribution of Bultmann's Lutheranism to the emphasis on preaching is found in the way in which he radicalizes the emphasis on justification by faith and soteriology. Already the discussion of history has acknowledged that Bultmann argues that he sees himself as carrying justification by faith to its logical conclusions. It should be marked further that for Bultmann the extreme concentration on justification produces an extreme concentration on soteriology which leads to three distinctive notes in Bultmann: 1) the elevation of the *pro me* emphasis of the early Luther and Melancton to the position of basic criterion for all theological statements; 2) a prevailing concentration on anthropology; and 3) the acceptance of existentialism as handmaiden of theology.

It is axiomatic in interpreting Bultmann to highlight the fact that the central question of the Christian faith rests not in concentration on the nature of Christ in metaphysical terms, but rather in concentration on the *pro me* benefits of Christ in present existence. As justification by faith is radicalized then everything begins to turn on knowing the benefits of Christ pro me. Bultmann frequently turns to the sentence from the Loci Theologici which states, "This is what it means to know Christ--to know the benefits that he has obtained for us, and not . . . theoretically to contemplate his natures and the manner of his incarnation." Typical of Bultmann's approach is his discussion of the Christological confession of the World Council of Churches, "The World Council of Churches is composed of Churches which acknowledge Jesus Christ as God and Saviour." In commenting on this affirmation, Bultmann says,

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[392] Walter Leibrecht, *Religion and Culture* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1959), p. 241.

> The decisive question might now be this: whether and how far titles (New Testament titles for Jesus) at any time intend to tell us something about the nature of Jesus--how far they describe him, so to speak, objectifying him in his being in himself, or whether and how far they speak of him in his significance for man, for faith? Do they speak--I can formulate it this way too--of his phusis or of the Christus pro me? How far is a Christological pronouncement about him also a pronouncement about me? Does he help me because he is God's Son, or is he the Son of God because He helps me?[393]

Bultmann's argument moves along the lines of insisting on the latter alternative in this statement. Where Christological statements ". . . digress into objectivizing propositions, they are to be interpreted critically."[394] Bultmann argues that the attempt to focus discussion on the question of the natures of Christ is a faulty development. He suggests that perhaps ". . . one ought to avoid such formulas on account of misunderstanding and cheerfully content oneself with saying that he is the Word of God."[395] To Bultmann's mind, anyway, the emphasis on the Word of God offers the possibility of avoiding objectifying statements in favor of the _pro_ _me_ nature of God's speaking and acting.

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[393] Bultmann, Essays, op. cit., p. 280.

[394] Ibid., p. 301.

In another context the _pro_ _me_ concentration of Bultmann's thought appears in his interpretation of the atoning significance of the cross. Bultmann asserts.

> To believe in Christ means to believe in the cross of Christ. The saving efficacy of the cross is not derived from the fact that it is the cross of Christ: it is the cross of Christ because it has saving efficacy.[396]

On this score, the significance of the cross rests in its soteriological effect, and not in any analysis of the significance of Christology concentrating on _who_ it is dying on the cross. The significance of the cross is manifestly not a question of the fact that it is the Son of God who dies, but that cross is significant as it is preached as saving Word _pro_ _me_.

In such ways Bultmann's unrelenting question concerning all theological statements is the question of how they are significant _for_ _me_ _now_. Bultmann, of course, acknowledges quite definitely the _extra_ nos reality of God, but insists that we can make no substantive statements about God extra nos, or God pro se. Theological statements are limited to pro me statements.[397] Questions concerning Creation, Christology, the Spirit, eschatology--indeed the whole range of theological assertions are consistently brought back to the vital question of their significance pro me. As the Lutheran emphasis on justification by faith is radicalized the integral concerns of theology are reduced to pro me statements, and significantly this leads to the concentration on preaching. The pro me dimension of theological statements finds its proper locus in the personal address of the sermon.

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[395] _Ibid_., p. 287

[396] Bartsch, _Kerygma and Myth_, _op. cit_., p. 41.

A second result of the radicalizing of justification by faith is seen in Bultmann's concentration on anthropology. Two factors are significant here. First, if all theological statements are to be limited to their significance pro me, then it follows that the basic affirmation made by theology are affirmations about man vis a vis the Word of God. Second, Bultmann insists that we cannot speak of God pro se, but rather only of God in His address to man. This would seem to suggest, consequently, that on Bultmann's score the only substantive statements theology can make are statements about man. James Smart, marking such emphases in Bultmann, argues that with Bultmann's consistent emphasis on the effects of revelation, the benefits of Christ, theology is indeed converted into anthropology.[398] Bultmann lends weight to such an allegation in such an essay as "What Sense Is There To Speak of God?"[399] In this essay Bultmann takes up the familiar argument against objectifying statements about God as well as the polemic against reliance on 'proofs' of faith. His thesis is stated, "It is . . . evident that if one wishes to speak to God he must certainly speak of himself."[400] Bultmann insists that this does not mean a simple talking about ourselves as selves. He marks the fact that God is the reality who determines our existence, who confronts us in His Word. This means then that he who would speak of God

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[397] It is interesting to note that stemming from Bultmann's concentration on pro me there has arisen a new word for theological discussions, namely, promeity. Cf., Robert Funk, Language, Word of God, and Hermeneutic, op. cit., p. 112 ff.

> . . . would have to speak of his existence as one determined by God and he can only speak of it as such as a sinner; i.e., as of being in an existence in which he cannot see God, in which God is confronted as the wholly other.[401]

The point to be noted is that talk of God revolves around talk of our existence; existence, that is, limited and confronted by God. But still, the substantive statements are statements about man. Anthropology is the basic frame of reference, albeit an anthropology of a very distinct type.

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[398] James Smart, The Interpretation of Scripture, op. cit., pp. 281-282. Cf. Also James Smart, The Divided Mind of Modern Theology, op. cit.

[399] Rudolf Bultmann, "What Sense Is There To Speak of God?" The Christian Scholar, XLIII (1960), 213 ff.

[400] Ibid., p. 215.

[401] Ibid., p. 216.

James Smart suggests that one reason for Bultmann's decided anthropological bias rests in the fact that he has absolutized the "infine qualitative difference" between God and man and refuses to allow that God can in reality enter the realm of man's life. We cannot speak of God incarnate, on Bultmann's grounds, but only of the effects of man's being confronted by God.[402] But it would seem that the contention can also be made that the insistence on the anthropological bias in Bultmann stems from the radicalizing of the doctrine of justification, and it may be in reality that Luther and Melancton are of more decisive importance at this point than Kierkegaard. However one arrives at a conclusion, it is nevertheless quite clear that the soteriological concentration in Bultmann focuses theological discussion on man as he is confronted by the Word, and in this scheme the "homiletical orientation" of Bultmann's program is apparent.

A third consequence of Bultmann's radicalization of justification and concentration on soteriology is seen in his insistence upon 'existentialist interpretation'. If theological conversation forgoes any conversation of God _pro se_, as Bultmann insists, and if the focal point is actually modern man's confrontation with the benefits of Christ _pro me_ as proclaimed in the kerygma, then it is necessary to translate the affirmations of the gospel into categories relevant to modern scientific man. Bultmann finds such categories readily at hand in Heidegger's existentialism and argues that only as such a valid description of modern man is employed by theology can the real scandal of the gospel become clear.

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[402] Smart, _op. cit._, p. 281.

The subject of Bultmann's use of existentialist categories is, to say the least, a complex one. It is not our purpose here to explore in detail either the 'roots' or the 'fruits' of Bultmann's existentialism. We have already marked the fact that Bultmann cites Heidegger's work as exerting particular influence on his thought, leading especially to a deeper understanding of the historical character of human existence.[403] The question that concerns us here, however, is why Bultmann insists on utilizing existentialist categories. Did he find an independent philosophy which especially spoke to him and then reshape the Christian message to conform with the contours of that philosophy? Or were there present in his theology other factors which prepared the ground for the insistence that existentialism be accepted as the valid handmaiden of theology?

The evidence would seem to suggest that the latter alternative has more to say for it. In Bultmann we do not find one who arbitrarily forces Christian faith into an existentialist mold. Rather the groundwork for the utilization of existentialist categories is laid by the theological and exegetical presuppositions accepted. Theologically Bultmann has radicalized justification by faith to the extent that all issues turn on the question of the benefits of Christ _pro me_. He has accepted a definition of the universe as a "closed continuum" which precludes the possibility of a divine irruption upon the plane of history. He has argued that we cannot speak of God pro se, but only of man as he is confronted by God. Exegetically his historical critical studies have led to the conclusion that the New Testament does not reflect historical (historie) accounts but consists of kerygma. The aim of the New Testament materials is personal address, confrontation or encounter with the word of God's grace and the call to live in freedom from this world. The issue both theologically and exegetically revolves around the question of man's faith response to the word of salvation now. The concern of theology is manifestly not the establishing of some historical security for the believer, nor is it focused on acceptance of doctrines about God. For such a program it is imperative that the affirmations of the gospel be couched in a conceptuality pertinent to modern scientific man who has abandoned the 'mythological' framework of thought of the New Testament. Such a conceptuality Bultmann finds ready at hand in Heidegger's existentialism. The task for theology, and especially for the preacher vis a vis modern man, is translation or demythologization of the gospel, and in such a program Bultmann concludes, "An existentialist interpretation is the only solution."[404]

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[403] Cf. Bultmann, "Milestones in Books," _The Expository Times_, _op. cit_., p. 125.

Bultmann does not explicitly argue the case for the employment of existentialist categories. In the essay on revelation discussed earlier it was noted that in describing the possible concepts of revelation one brings to the question of revelation Bultmann's alternatives reflect presuppositions that set the stage for the turn to existentialism, or to use James Smart's phrase, ". . . the dice are loaded in the direction of existentialism"[405] In the programmatic essay on demythologizing the turn to existentialism as the "only" solution is simply assumed. To be sure various reasons are given for such a solution, but the case for the exclusive use of existentialist categories is not specifically argued.[406] Further, in the important essay, "The Problem of Hermeneutics,"[407] the existentialist interpretation, while discussed at some length, is not specifically justified as the only alternative.

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[404] Bartsch, Kerygma and Myth, op. cit., p. 15.

While one looks in vain for an explicit apologetic for the exclusive use of existentialist categories in Bultmann, it is not difficult to ascertain that one decisive influence in his thought is the radical concentration of all issues on the question of soteriology, or to use existentialist phraseology, on the question of authentic existence. Basic Lutheran presuppositions carried to an extreme lay the groundwork for the employment of existentialist thought. Bultmann's discussion of the problem of hermeneutics reveals something of the path followed in concentrating on the question of existence. He insists that the interpretation given to any bit of writing implies some prior interest or understanding. He argues, quite pertinently, that one must be clear about the understanding he has in coming to a text, and to do so is basic to a truly objective interpretation. To hide our presuppositions, as though we had none in approaching a text, would involve us in the possibility of a dangeours distortion of the text. His argument goes on to assert that in coming to the New Testament we have definite interests in mind, and it is at this point that Bultmann's subtle reduction of questions to questions of existence begins to manifest itself. He insists that our turning to records that speak of the action of God ". . . presuppose a prior understanding of what may in my case be termed the action of God . . . "[408] He says that man is aware of God in the very inquiry about God, resorting to Augustine's dictum concerning the restlessness of man's heart. Bultmann writes, "In human existence an existentiell knowledge of God is alive in the form of the inquiry about 'happiness', 'salvation', the meaning of the world and of history. . ."[409] He then goes on, in a characteristic paragraph, to assert

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[405] Supra., p. 163.

[406] Cf. Bartsch, Kerygma and Myth, op. cit., p. 15 ff.

[407] Bultmann, Essays, op. cit., p. 234 ff.

> Existentiell knowledge about God exists in some kind of explicit form, when it gains conscious expression. For example, if it is consciously expressed in the question 'What must I do to be saved?' (Acts 16:30), then in it some kind of notion of 'salvation' is presupposed. The inquiry directed at the New Testament must be prepared for a correction of the notion it brings with it in hearing what the New Testament has to say. However, it can only receive such a correction if the basic intention of the inquiry, as comprised in the concept of 'salvation', coincides with the intention of the answer given in the New Testament.[410]

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[408] Ibid., p. 257.

[409] Ibid., p. 258.

[410] Ibid., p. 258.

Such an approach to the New Testament demands not only careful attention to the text of the New Testament, but also demands ". . . the relevant interpretation of human existence."[411] That leads one to the philosophical task of existential analysis of human existence, and means further that for scientific interpretation of the New Testament it is necessary to work in existentialist categories because we are seeking the understanding of existence which comes to expression in the New Testament itself. To fail to give central attention to the concept of existence which is alive in both the interpreter and the understanding of the New Testament writer runs the risk of turning the Bible into a ". . . compendium of dogmatic pronouncements, or . . . 'sources' for the reconstruction of a section of past history, or to study (of) a religious phenomenon or the nature of religion in general . . ."[412] This is manifestly a mistake, turning the Bible into something it does not want to be. Rather, the inquiry about God leads integrally to the inquiry into the reality of human existence, which is the burden of the New Testament materials. In such a line of development the inquiry about God ends up with concentrated attention devoted to the inquiry about human existence consistent with the idea that we cannot know God pro se, but only the benefits of Christ pro me. Along these lines it can be argued that Bultmann is simply radical Lutheran in his utilization of existentialist categories.

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[411] Ibid., p. 258.

[412] Ibid., pp. 258-259.

There are, of course, numerous critics of such a proposal. The response argues that the philosophical analysis of human existence becomes a binding strait jacket imposed on the text. The decision that the text must speak about existence imposes unnecessary limitations on the text. Karl Barth, for instance, writes,

> Bultmann is an exegete. But it is impossible to engage him in exegetical discussion. For he is also a systematic theologian of the type which handles texts in such a way that their exegesis is always controlled by a set of dogmatic presuppositions and is thus wholly dependent upon their validity.[413]

In another context, Barth says, "The erection of this doctrine of prior understanding as the norm . . . would seem to be the death of all right and genuine understanding."[414] It is not just the use of existentialist philosophy that concerns Barth, but equally as much the theological presuppositions derived from Bultmann's radical Lutheranism.[415]

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[413] Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, II 2, p. 445. Cf. Bultmann's reply to Barth's criticism in Bultmann, Essays, op. cit., p. 259 ff.

[414] Bartsch, Kerygma and Myth, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 127.

[415] For other representative criticisms of Bultmann's proposals cf. the various debates with Bultmann in Bartsch, Kerygma and Myth, op. cit., and Bartsch, Kerygma and Myth, Vol. II, op. cit.

It should also be distinctly marked in this context that Bultmann makes an important distinction between 'presuppositions' and 'preunderstanding'. In his important essay "Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible?" (Bultmann, Existence and Faith, op. cit., p. 289 ff.) he insists that one cannot presuppose the results of exegesis. He says, "In this sense, exegesis without presuppositions is not only possible but demanded" (p. 289). However, he goes on to argue that one cannot escape the presupposition of the historical method in interrogating the text. And more importantly, he insists that ". . . a specific understanding of the subject matter of the text, on the basis of a 'life

One thing deserves careful underscoring. As Bultmann sees it, the use of existentialism in theology is not a case of importing an alien philosophy and imposing it upon the Christian faith. Rather it is the case of the utilization of a friendly and quite compatible philosophy. Bultmann insists, "Heidegger's existentialist analysis of the ontological structure of being would seem to be no more than a secularized, philosophical version of the New Testament view of human life."[416] He seems to rest his case on the fact that the geneological tree of existentialism

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relation' to it, is always presupposed by exegesis; and insofar as this is so no exegesis is without presupposition." (p. 294) It is in the vitality of the 'life-relation' to the text that the text is really understood. He concludes the essay with five theses which delineate his understanding of the process of exegesis. Bultmann writes, "(1) The exegesis of the biblical writings, like every other interpretation of a text, must be unprejudiced. (2) However, the exegesis is not without presuppositions, because as historical interpretation it presupposes the method of historical-critical research. (3) Furthermore, there is presupposed a 'life-relation' of the exegete with the subject matter with which the Bible is concerned and, together with this relation, a preunderstanding. (4) This preunderstanding is not a closed one, but rather is open, so that there can be an existentiell encounter with the text and an existentiell decision. (5) The understanding of the text is never a definitive one, but rather remains open because the meaning of the Scriptures discloses itself anew to every future." (p. 285) Concerning the third thesis which argues for 'preunderstanding', Bultmann comments, ". . . we may note that the preunderstanding has its basis in the question concerning God that is alive in human life. Thus it does not mean that the exegete must know everything possible about God, but rather that he is moved by the existentiell question for God--regardless of the form that this question actually takes in his consciousness." (p. 296) One can discern that Bultmann makes a distinction between 'presupposition' and 'preunderstanding'. It is questionable whether Barth gives adequate attention to the distinction Bultmann seeks to make in his argument that Bultmann's 'preunderstanding' unduly controls the results of exegesis.

[416] Bartsch, Kerygma and Myth, op. cit., p. 24.

runs: Kierkegaard, Luther, Paul.[417] The adequacy of existentialism as a philosophical partner for theology continues to be debated, and its validity as such is not the question to be discussed here. It is, however, important to mark the fact that Bultmann's use of existentialism is not to his mind the importing of a hostile philosophy, but rather the use of a philosophy that ". . . is saying the same thing as the New Testament and saying it quite independently."[418]

It must also be added that for Bultmann there is a decisive point of departure from existentialism. In the analysis of the structure of existence, the philosophers may be helpful, but in the prescription of what to do about man's inauthentic existence there is a marked difference. Bultmann writes,

> . . . the New Testament and the philosophers agree that the authentic life is possible only because in some sense it is already a present possession. But there is one difference--the New Testament speaks thus only to Christian believers, only to those who have opened their hearts to the redemptive action of God. It never speaks thus to natural man, for he does not possess life, and his plight is one of despair.[419]

Thus while acknowledging Bultmann's use of existentialist categories one must not make the mistake of classing him simply as an existentialist.

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[417] Cf. Giovanni Miegge, Gospel and Myth (Richmond: John Knox, 1960), p. 68, for discussion of this geneological tree.

[418] Bartsch, Kerygma and Myth, op. cit., p. 25.

[419] Ibid., p. 29.

We come then to this conclusion: a right understanding of Bultmann's existentialism involves a clear recognition of his distinctive Lutheranism. In following certain contours of Lutheran theology Bultmann finds Heidegger as a companion in pertinent interpretation of the gospel for modern man. Thomas Oden states the case quite aptly in the following manner:

> We are entirely in agreement with Gloege's view that a correct estimate of Bultmann must always perceive him essentially as Lutheran. To this we would wish to add a very simple formulation--that Bultmann is basically to be understood as a Lutheran existentialist, both fully Heideggerian and fully confessional, and _any attempt to_ perceive him as unlutheran in his existentialism (Kinder, Kunneth _et al._) _or unexistential in his Lutheranism_ (Buri, Jaspers, Ogden, _et al._) _is in our view an inadequate perception of his significance for contemporary theology._[420]

The especially pertinent point to be marked for our purposes is that the radicalization of justification with the emphasis on the '_promeity_' of the gospel, the concentration on anthropology, _and_ the utilization of existentialist categories leads to a concentrated focus on preaching. In a way paralleling Luther's dynamic view of preaching, Bultmann's thought emphasizes that the dynamic event of significance is preaching. The way in which the _pro me_ reality of God's grace is realized is in the present event of preaching. In the law-gospel dialectic it is present proclamation of the gospel that is crucial. In demythologizing the focus is manifestly on present preaching of Christ to modern man. The basic question in theology is the question of authentic existence which is known in response to the preached Christ. Existentialism is employed for the sake of realistic and decisive confrontation in the challenging word of preaching. There are, to be sure, other important issues at stake, but the peculiar lines of Bultmann's thought are homiletically oriented in a decisive way. Ian Henderson adequately summarizes the basic characteristic of Bultmann's theology when he writes,

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[420] Thomas Oden, "Bultmann As Lutheran Existentialist," _Dialog_, III (Summer, 1965), 209.

> The positive element behind Bultmann's thought. . . is his insistence that Jesus Christ as Saviour is a present reality . . . . If Christ's Cross and sufferings are present realities, it follows that the way to come to them is not through the historian's research into the past. On the contrary, Bultmann maintains, it is only in the Kerygma of the church that there is actual meeting with the Lord Christ. Bultmann's central and quite positive contention is that I meet Christ now, when in the proclamation of the church He is presented to me and when I have to decide for or against Him.[421]

We began our discussion seeking to discern why an eminent New Testament scholar places such concentrated focus on preaching. Subsequent discussion has sought to show that at least these characteristics of Bultmann's thought are crucial for the concentration on preaching: revelation as present encounter; negative historical conclusions which lead to a positive emphasis on kerygma; Lutheran emphases which concentrate on soteriological experience now in response to the preached Christ. The pervasive concern running throughout Bultmann's theology is the concern for the present significance of Christ for human existence. Theological statements are queried in terms of the question of present significance and this leads to a concentration on preaching where the significance of the act of God in Jesus Christ is present as challenging, accosting, liberating Word. The attempt to arrive at present significance through historical reconstruction or doctrinal propositions to be accepted is fundamentally a wrong-headed procedure. Rather it is through the preaching of the Church that modern man is confronted with the essential significance of Jesus Christ for human existence today.

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[421] Ian Henderson, Myth in the New Testament, op. cit., p. 25.

D. Bultmann's concept of preaching. Several basic characteristics of Bultmann's concept of preaching are implicit in what has been written. It remains for us, however, to seek to isolate four fundamental themes which pervade his discussion of preaching, and which together serve to indicate the theology of preaching one finds in Bultmann. While there will be of necessity some overlapping of ideas we shall employ the following rubrics as cues for understanding Bultmann's concept of preaching: 1) Preaching as eschatological event; 2) Preaching as kerygma; 3) Preaching as challenge to self-understanding; and 4) Preaching as the Word of God.

Before proceeding to the discussion of these basic ideas it is pertinent to mark the fact that Bultmann defines the Church primarily in terms of its task of proclamation. He disavows the effort to discuss the church as ecclesiastical institution, preferring to highlight the character of the church as 'event', a coming into being of the event of proclamation of Jesus Christ as the eschatological event. In

Jesus Christ and Mythology Bultmann expresses his idea of the church, saying,

> The word of God and the Church belong together, because it is by the word that the Church is constituted as the community of the called, in so far as the preaching is not a lecture comprised of general propositions but the message which is proclaimed by authorized, legitimate messengers. As the word is God's word only as an event, the Church is genuine Church only as an event which happens each time here and now; for the Church is the eschatological community of saints, and it is only in a paradoxical way identical with the ecclesiastical institutions which we observe as social phenomena of secular history.[422]

When Bultmann discusses the church it is consistently in terms of the "utilitarian" view of the church which sees that the church exists ". . . primarily for the sake of its mission of proclaiming the Word."[423] Bultmann acknowledges that he has not given extensive attention to a doctrine of the Church. Rather, he alleges, his emphasis has been on the one-sided picture of ". . . the individual person in his relationship to the kerygma."[424] From this one-sided viewpoint conversation about the church is primarily conversation about the church in her function of proclamation. The simplest formula for Bultmann's idea of the church, according to Macquarrie, is "Wherever the Word is proclaimed there is the Church."[425] One can recognize here the insistence of the Reformers that the Church be defined in terms of the Word proclaimed, though, of course, Bultmann's thought introduces a particular variation on this Reformation theme. Our concern is to discern the way Bultmann conceives the central event of the church's life, namely her proclamation.

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[422] Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), pp. 82-83. Cf. also Bartsch, Kerygma and Myth, op. cit., pp. 209-210.

[423] John Macquarrie, An Existentialist Theology, op. cit., p. 218.

[424] Kegley, ed., The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, op. cit., p. 277.

1. Preaching as eschatological event. In recurring contexts Bultmann describes preaching as eschatological event. For instance, in discussing Paul's theology Bultmann writes that the Apostle

> . . . has lifted the present eschatological occurrence out of the dimension of cosmic occurrence into that of historic by regarding it as taking place in the preaching of the word which proclaims Jesus as the crucified and risen Lord. In this proclamation the judgment is already taking place, for it spreads abroad death for refusal of faith and life for faith.[426]

The locus of Jesus Christ as eschatological event is preaching, which in fulfilling its appointed task becomes itself eschatological event.

Such an idea of preaching finds expression as Bultmann seeks to answer the charge that he minimizes the "once for all" nature of the event of Jesus Christ. Bultmann insists that the true significance of the "once for all" event is realized when Christ is preached as God's decisive Word. He writes,

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[425] Macquarrie, An Existentialist Theology, op. cit., p. 219.

[426] Bultmann, The Theology of the New Testament, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 307.

> Since he is the Word of God, Christ is ante et extra me, not, however, as a fact open to objective verification and chronologically datable before me, but as Christus pro me, who encounters me as the Word. The eschatological event, which Christ is, is consequently realized invariably and solely in concreto here and now, where the Word is proclaimed. . . and meets with faith or unbelief. Thus the ephapax is understood as never before in its true sense of the 'once' of the eschatological event. For it does not mean the datable uniqueness and finality of an event of past history, but teaches us in a high degree of paradox to believe that just such an event of the past is the once-and-for-all eschatological event, which is continually re-enacted in the word of proclamation.[427]

Jesus Christ as eschatological event is such solely as he is preached as eschatological event. As eschatological event Christ is not to be defined in metaphysical terms, but in terms of the Word which becomes here and now living proclamation. The event of preaching is thus eschatological event.

In Bultmann's Gifford lectures we hear the same emphasis. He affirms that Jesus Christ is the eschatological event, the action of God by which God has set an end to the old world. Then he adds,

> It is the paradox of the Christian message that the eschatological event, according to John and Paul, is not to be understood as a dramatic cosmic catastrophe but as happening within history, beginning with the appearance of Jesus Christ and in continuity with this occurring again and again in history, but not as the kind of historical development which can be confirmed by any historian. It becomes an event repeatedly in preaching and faith. Jesus Christ is the eschatological event not as an

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[427] Bultmann, History and Eschatology, op. cit., pp. 151-152.

> established fact of past time but as repeatedly present, as addressing you and me here and now in preaching.[428]

Repeatedly Bultmann makes such an emphasis. The significance of Jesus Christ as eschatological event comes to expression in the word of preaching which as such becomes the eschatological event for men today.[429]

It is important to recall that in speaking of Christ as eschatological event Bultmann's concern is not to describe him in terms of a cosmological eschatology, but rather an anthropological eschatology. Characteristically, Bultmann turns the question of eschatology on the issue of its present significance for man now. As eschatological event Jesus Christ, while unique in past history, is significant for man today in that it is manifest that in Jesus Christ the old world comes to an end. For man today this essentially means that man is freed from the attempt to derive meaning for his life from his own resources or those of this present world. Jesus Christ as eschatological event gives to man the possibility of authentic existence by freeing man from all dependence on this world as the word of God's grace is accepted in faith. The "end of the world" pole of eschatological assertions refers not to some future event, but to present event in which through the word of preaching Jesus Christ brings an 'end' to dependence on this world as the basis of authentic existence.

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[428] Bultmann, History and Eschatology, op. cit., pp. 151-152.

[429] Cf. such formulation in Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, op. cit., p. 82; Bartsch, Kerygma and Myth, op. cit., p. 42; Bultmann, History and Eschatology, op. cit., p. 52; Bultmann's replies to his critics in Kegley, ed., The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, op. cit., pp. 261, 271, 276, 277, 278, et al.

Paul Minear suggests that there are two basic norms at work in Bultmann's eschatology. The first norm, a negative one, insists that ". . . an eschatological viewpoint is non-valid and must be rejected to the degree that it embodies cosmological ingredients."[430] The second norm, a positive one, contends that ". . . an eschatology is valid to the degree that it produces and is in accord with 'the complete genuine historicity of man'."[431] The basic issue in eschatology is the present understanding of human existence, and it is in his significance for such an understanding that Jesus Christ is eschatological event. Bultmann contends in various contexts that it is the paradox of faith that the eschatological event which brings an end to this world is at the same time identified with the historical event of Jesus of Nazareth.[432] That paradox is overcome in faith. However, faith does not in turn concentrate on establishing the various details of that past history, but focuses on that event as offering the possibility for present transcendence of the world, living 'in but not of the world'. And the locus for the present significance of Jesus Christ as eschatological event is in the _preaching_ of him as such.

Bultmann sees preaching as fundamentally distorted, or, to use his phrase, "secularized," when it turns from the proclamation of

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[430] Kegley, ed., _The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann_, _op. cit_., p. 66.

[431] _Ibid_., p. 66.

[432] Cf., for instance, the discussion in Bartsch, _Kerygma and Myth_, _op. cit_., p. 110.

Christ in his significance for present existence to matters limited simply to a past event. He writes,

> . . . Christian preaching says that Jesus appearance was not an event in the world but means the end of the world. Accordingly, preaching is secularized wherever Jesus is understood as an appearance in history, as a phenomenon of intellectual history, as a hero and model of piety, as the bearer of a new, pure ethics, wherever there is talk of the beneficial influences which emanate from him, no matter how high the word.[433]

Rather the right preaching of Jesus Christ as eschatological means that "Genuine preaching preaches him as the end of the world when it preaches him as Lord." And for Bultmann this involves preaching which issues the call to man to abandon dependence on the world,

> . . . not basing one's life on what is temporary, on the world that can be understood in its laws, utilized and ruled. It means to see in the purposes of worldly activity no ultimate purposes, in the meaning of worldly work no ultimate meaning. It means as long as we are in the world, to withdraw from the world into that attitude which Paul characterized as the attitude of as though they did not . . .[434]

Jesus Christ as eschatological event is the end of the world by bringing an end to dependence on this world for authentic existence.

We can come at the meaning of preaching as eschatological event from a slightly different angle. On Bultmann's score, history as Historie is barred as an object of legitimate concern, and history as Geschichte is the focal point of interest. This leads to the concentrated focus on preaching, for it is in the word of preaching that the event of Jesus Christ as Geschichte is present to us. This is what Bultmann discovers in the New Testament, i.e., not historical documents but kerygmatic materials. As the preaching of the church today proclaims not historical conclusions but the kerygma of the eschatological event in Christ, then preaching itself assumes an eschatological dimension. For instance, in addressing the question concerning how the cross of Christ is recognizable as salvation-occurrence, Bultmann says,

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[433] Leibreicht, Religion and Culture, op. cit., p. 241.

[434] Ibid., p. 241.

> He cannot be recognized in his divine quality in order that one may then advance to faith in the significance of the cross--for that would rob the 'word of the cross' of its scandal-and-folly character. It gets that character by the fact that a crucified one is proclaimed as Lord; and only in the fact that this proclamation occurs is the cross recognizable as salvation-occurrence. (Underlining added by writer.)[435]

Along similar lines Bultmann argues that the resurrection is not to be ascertained in terms of 'what actually happened', but is to be accepted as preaching proclaims Christ as risen. He writes,

> The resurrection cannot . . . be demonstrated or made plausible as an objectively ascertainable fact on the basis of which one could believe. But insofar as it or the risen Christ is present in the proclaiming word, it can be believed--and only so can it be believed. (Underlining added by writer.)[436]

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[435] Bultmann, The Theology of the New Testament, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 303.

[436] Ibid., p. 305.

What happens when the resurrection is preached is that ". . . a historical person and his fate are raised to the rank of eschatological event."[437] Bultmann's line of thought suggests that as Christ is preached as significant for present existence, then He is preached as risen. We cannot here enter into the lengthy critique of Bultmann's treatment of the resurrection. We can, however, underline the fact that it is the preaching of Christ as risen, Christ as eschatological event bringing an end to dependence on this world, that gives significance to all that happened. On this score, one can write, as Bultmann does, ". . . the salvation occurrence is present in the proclamation . . . the latter belongs to the former as a part of it."[438] This gives to preaching the character of eschatological event.

It will be recalled that Bultmann does not disavow all interest in the historical Jesus. He does see the appearance of this figure of Nazareth as the unique manifestation in history of the eschatological event. But making whatever concessions he does to the necessity of the 'that' of Jesus, he persistently refuses to involve himself in further historical verification. Rather he insists, "The Jesus of history is not kerygma. . . . For in the kerygma Jesus encounters us as the Christ--that is the eschatological phenomenon *par excellence*."[439] Then, after affirming that neither John nor Paul were interested in mediating an encounter with the historical Jesus, Bultmann goes on to say,

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[437] *Ibid*., pp. 305-306.

[438] *Ibid*., p. 307.

[439] Bartsch, *Kerygma and Myth*, *op. cit*., p. 117.

> To understand Jesus as the eschatological phenomenon (that is as the Saviour through whom God delivers the world by passing judgement on it and granting the future as a gift to those who believe on him), all that is necessary is to proclaim that he has come. . . . I am deliberately renouncing any form of encounter with a phenomenon of past history, including encounter with Christ after the flesh, in order to encounter the Christ proclaimed in the kerygma, which confronts me in my historic situation. . . . I still deny that historical research can ever encounter any traces of the epiphany of God in Christ; all it can do is to confront us with the Jesus of history. Only the Church's proclamation can bring us face to face with Kyrios Christos.[440]

The impact of such emphases effectively means that for Bultmann the only valid place to turn in seeking to grasp the reality of the Cross and resurrection as eschatological event is to the preached word today. Bultmann repeatedly argues that ". . . the incarnation is . . . an eschatological event and not a datable event of the past; it is an event which is continually being re-enacted in the event of proclamation."[441] The constant refrain in Bultmann runs:

> Through the word of preaching the cross and resurrection
> are made present: the eschatological 'now' is here . . .
> In the word of preaching and there alone we meet the risen Lord.[442]

Preaching, on this score, bears an inescapable eschatological character.

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[440] Ibid., pp. 117-118.

[441] Ibid., p. 209.

[442] Ibid., pp. 42-43.

Malevez comments that in Bultmann preaching has ". . . an outstandingly soteriological role"[443] in that preaching does not merely consist of communication of facts, but is in itself a vital part of the eschatological event. Without the preaching, the event of Jesus Christ is simply a matter of past history which may or may not interest us. But in the event of preaching, that particular historie is given the significance of eschatological event upon which hang the issues of life and death.

Interestingly, Karl Barth alleges that what we have in Bultmann is a kind of kerygmatic transubstantiation. Barth writes,

> What is Bultmann's conception but an existentialist translation of the sacramentalist teaching of the Roman Church, according to which, at the climax of the mass, with the transubstantiation of the elements--in metaphysical identity with what took place there and then--there is a 'bloodless repetition' of the sacrifice of Christ on Golgotha.[444]

Such words are, of course, written in criticism, but they stand as an apt summary of what Bultmann sees to be happening in preaching as eschatological event. Bultmann himself speaks of preaching as a sacramental event which ". . . represents the events of the past in such a way that it renews them."[445] In such representation preaching itself assumes the character of eschatological event.

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[443] Malevez, The Christian Message and Myth, op. cit., p. 89.

[444] Barth, C.D. IV 1, p. 767.

[445] Bartsch, Kerygma and Myth, op. cit., p. 115.

2. *Preaching as Kerygma*. On the surface such a rubric sounds redundant. *Kerygma* is preaching! What sense does it make to speak of preaching as kerygma? It makes sense when we explore the particular bias Bultmann employs in using the word 'kerygma'. His emphasis in using the word '*kerygma*' gives to preaching a distinctive character.

At the outset it is noteworthy to mark that the word 'kerygma' has become one of the cliches of contemporary theology and it is used by different persons to highlight first one and then another aspect of the Christian faith. Gerhard Ebeling contends that there has as yet been no adequate study of the adoption and use of the word 'kerygma' in recent theology.[446] He marks the fact that the word was used only sparingly in nineteenth century theology, and even in the early writings of Bultmann was not significantly employed. But that the word has been extensively used in recent theology goes without saying. It is indeed quite interesting that the noun *kerygma*, which is used infrequently in the New Testament, has come to dominate so much contemporary theology. It is instructive to seek to ascertain how a particular writer is using the word.

For instance, C. H. Dodd, to whom the English speaking world has looked primarily for an understanding of 'kerygma', uses the word in quite a different frame of reference from that of Bultmann.[447] Dodd establishes the fact that the materials of the New Testament are primarily 'preaching' materials, and goes on to seek to define certain definite doctrinal statements of content which compose the 'kerygma' of the early church. Dodd's bias highlights the content of the kerygma. Bultmann, however, concentrates on the action of preaching. J. P. Sweet is thus led to ask "Whose Kerygma--Bultmann's or Dodd's"[448] Sweet acknowledges that the word can be used in the two senses 'kerygma' has in the New Testament--the dynamic activity of preaching or the content of preaching. Bultmann places priority on the action of preaching, Dodd on content, though there is, as one would expect, no neat separation of the two emphases. That is, Bultmann is not unconcerned about content. The dynamic activity of preaching as personal address is still the preaching of Jesus Christ as Lord. But it remains that the consistent burden of Bultmann's concern in employing the word 'kerygma' rests on the action of preaching as an event of personal address and challenge.

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[446] Gerhard Ebeling, *Theology and Proclamation*, *op. cit*., p. 113.

[447] C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936).

Bultmann's case for the emphasis on kerygma derives from the well acknowledged fact that the New Testament does not present us historical reports or doctrinal summaries to be accepted, but rather gives us the preaching material of the early Christian community. This is a commonplace assertion. But Bultmann exploits this finding and from the perspective of the various lines of thought discussed above disavows any attempt to discern from the 'kerygma' in the New Testament even seminal historical reports. Faith does not rest on historical assurances nor on doctrinal summaries, but is response to a Word of personal address. 'Kerygma' is just that--personal address, the word of challenge that puts the hearer in a new situation. He writes, for instance, that faith has an undogmatic character ". . . insofar as the word of proclamation is no mere report about historical incidents. . . . the word is kerygma, personal address, demand, promise. . ."[449] In such words we get a basic cue for Bultmann's bias in understanding 'kerygma'.

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[448] J. P. M. Sweet, "Second Thoughts. VIII. The Kerygma." The Expository Times, LXXVI, No. 5 (February 1965), 143.

Such an understanding of 'kerygma' has quite marked implications for Bultmann's exegesis. When he turns to scripture he seeks to interpret them at every turn in terms of the word of personal address and demand which confronts the hearer as challenge to his self-understanding. Minear marks the fact that for Bultmann ". . . historiography is therefore not scientific but homiletical"[450] Concern is not turned to the question of 'what happened', but to the question of present significance. Hermann Diem also underscores the fact that Bultmann's exegesis is consistently permeated by the drive to understand the text 'kerygmatically', as a word of personal address aimed at present self-understanding. Diem writes,

> He (Bultmann) regards as kerygma not the Scriptures as a whole, but only the challenging word of Scripture which finds the hearer and calls him to a decision and thus becomes for him the

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[449] Bultmann, The Theology of the New Testament, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 319.

[450] Kegley, The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, op. cit., p. 68.

> Word of God. This kerygma is never to be found in a pure state in the Scriptures, where it always faces us in the guise of theological elaboration. It must be disentangled from the latter so that 'it may be understood as furnishing the possibility of man's self-understanding and so mediating a call to decision.' Thus at every point he must analyse out 'kerygmatic' elements, which means that he must try to interpret texts 'kerygmatically'.[451]

For instance, Bultmann affirms that Jesus is the eschatological event, but for such an affirmation it is not germane that one should pursue the question of the 'what' and 'how' of Jesus. What we have is simply the 'that' of Jesus, and more especially the 'that' of his crucifixion, and then the early Christian kerygma which proclaimed Jesus as eschatological event. Faith is thus related not to historical events, but to the Word. In line upon line Bultmann seeks to keep clear the fact that the issue of faith is response to the preached Word, that Word which comes as a word of personal address and challenge to the hearer. Gerhard Ebeling characterizes Bultmann's position in these words:

> According to Bultmann we are concerned in the kerygma, not in the first place with the imparting of information, but with a challenge which demands from us obedience and decision, and which is addressed to the will or, to be more precise, to the conscience. The kerygma, thus seen as a challenge, qualifies anew the situation of the man to whom it is addressed. That is to say, that the kerygma considered as Word is an event which overtakes the man who hears it and forces him to a decision between faith and unfaith, and consequently to a decision about his own understanding of himself. The kerygma which presents man with a choice between faith and unfaith is the kerygma which tells of a particular eschatological act of God in Jesus Christ, i.e. of the paradox of the eschaton appearing in time. For as eschatological address the kerygma as challenge

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[451] Diem, Dogmatics, op. cit., p. 131.

> is identical with the content of the kerygma: the eschatological event which takes place within the relationship of Word and faith.[452]

Kerygmatic interpretation, on Bultmann's score, seizes with a vengeance the character of the word of preaching as personal address, and denigrates the question of history or doctrine as an issue for faith. Faith responds to the word of challenge and demand, and not to the word of historical dogmatic report.

There are, of course, many attendant problems related to such an emphasis. Diem alleges that in Bultmann, ". . . the 'historical fact' of Jesus and the preaching about Him become completely disparate."[453] Not only Bultmann's opponents, but also his followers, acknolwedge this point. It is among his most loyal students that there has arisen the 'new' quest of the historical Jesus. It is quite germane to ask not only the question of the historical Jesus, but also the question of whether the intent of the Scriptural witness is pervaded so exclusively with the anthropological concentration one finds in Bultmann. Such questions continue to agitate extensive discussion in contemporary theology. Our purpose, however, is not to join that discussion, but rather to pursue the question of the implication for preaching deriving from Bultmann's definition of kerygma as personal address challenging the hearer's self-understanding.

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[452] Ebeling, Theology and Proclamation, op. cit., p. 41.

[453] Diem, Dogmatics, op. cit., p. 131.

One place to turn in determining the implication for preaching involved in Bultmann's idea of 'kerygma' is his article on "Preaching: Genuine and Secularized."[454] There Bultmann writes,

> In what . . . does the character of religious, and particularly of Christian preaching consist? It goes without saying that it is direct address, a calling. Thus in the New Testament it is often called _kerygma_, the heralding, or _evangelion_, the message. The call which rings out and is heard is the _call_ _of_ _God_.[455]

Genuine Christian preaching is direct personal address. Bultmann's argument is that any form of preaching which compromises the address character of the sermon represents a secularization of preaching. On this score Christian preaching is not the propagation of a philosophy, nor is it to be confused with teaching. True preaching is also secularized when it is turned into popular psychology. It is amiss when it is construed to be ethical instruction, or doctrinal teaching. Furthermore, while Christian preaching has to relate to an historical fact, the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth, it is secularized ". . . whenever Jesus is understood as an appearance in history, as a phenomenon of intellectual history."[456] In line upon line Bultmann rules out various homiletical patterns and rests his case on the fact that genuine preaching is the word of personal address challenging the believer to trust and obey Jesus as Lord, which means allowing Jesus' freedom from the world to be the hearer's liberation from the world. The word of the sermon is manifestly distorted when it tries to be other than the word of personal address aimed at the hearer's self-understanding.

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[454] Leibreicht, ed., _Religion and Culture_, _op. cit_., p. 236 ff.

[455] _Ibid_., p. 236.

[456] _Ibid_., p. 241.

Wherever the subject of preaching comes into view in Bultmann's various writings, there is a persistent reference to the nature of preaching as personal address. In his Gifford lectures he writes, "Preaching is address, and as address demands answer, decision."[457] And in discussing the task of demythologizing, he says,

> The attempt to demythologize begins with this important insight: Christian preaching, in so far as it is preaching of the Word of God by God's command and in His name, does not offer a doctrine which can be accepted either by reason or by a sacrificium intellectus. Christian preaching is Kerygma, that is, a proclamation addressed not to the theoretical reason, but to the hearer as a self. . . . Demythologizing will make clear this function of preaching as a personal address.[458]

Or again, when he speaks of the possibility of hearing the Scripture as the Word of God he insists that this is possible only if ". . . to hear the Scriptures as the Word of God means to hear them as a word which is addressed to me, as kerygma, as a proclamation."[459] And still again, in another context, where Bultmann seeks to delineate the difference between philosophy and theology, he writes,

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[457] Bultmann, History and Eschatology, op. cit., p. 152.

[458] Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, op. cit., p. 36.

[459] Ibid., p. 71.

> For our purpose here, we may express the difference between philosophy and theology in some such way as this: philosophy shows that my being a man uniquely belongs to me, but it does not speak of my unique existence; this, however, is exactly what theology does. And in this sense, theology shares in a peculiar way in the character of address that belongs to the sermon.[460]

So it runs in many different contexts. Genuine preaching is distinctly the word of personal address, and in this it bears the mark of genuine kerygma.

As is the case at other points in Bultmann's theology, he radicalizes the personal address character of preaching. And it is apparent that the particular radicalizing of the personal address character of 'kerygma' is the consistent counterpart of a theology where revelation is defined as encounter which puts the hearer in a new situation, where negative historical conclusion turns into a positive argument for faith as response to the Word, and where the radicalizing of elements of Lutheran theology paves the way for concentration on anthropology, self-understanding, and existentialist hermeneutic. In this scheme the sermon as a word of personal address is the occasion of the revelatory encounter that puts the hearer in a new situation as a self. Faith is related not to historical findings nor dogmatic assertation but to the word of personal address in the 'kerygma'. And the issue of preaching and faith is self-understanding awakened by the word of personal address.

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[460] Bultmann, Existence and Faith, op. cit., p. 63. (Italics mine)

3. Preaching as challenge to self-understanding. It is obvious from preceding discussion that Bultmann places primary emphasis on the task of preaching as challenge to the self-understanding of the hearer. However, it is worthy of special note that basic to the interpretation of preaching in Bultmann is the radical emphasis on self-understanding. If in the emphasis on 'kerygma' the burden of concern falls on the action of preaching as personal address, it needs to be added that the basic content of preaching is self-understanding. To be sure, Bultmann insists, as has been argued, that Christian preaching is the preaching of Jesus Christ as Lord, but the focus of interest in such preaching is not on understanding of Jesus Christ, as such, but rather on the understanding of oneself given in the event of Jesus Christ. In what may be viewed as a typical comment of Bultmann one finds the traditional designation of preaching as the Word of God and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the eschatological event, but it remains that the basic concern pivots on the quest for self-understanding. Bultmann writes,

> The word of preaching confronts us as the Word of God. It is not for us to question its credentials. It is we who are questioned, we who are asked whether we will believe the word or reject it. But in answering this question, in accepting the word of preaching as the word of God and the death and resurrection of Christ as the eschatological event, we are given an opportunity of understanding ourselves. Faith and unbelief are never blind, arbitrary decisions. They offer us the alternative between accepting or rejecting that which alone can illuminate our understanding of ourselves.[461]

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[461] Bartsch, Kerygma and Myth, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

The radicalizing of justification and the _pro me_ dimension of the gospel, coupled with the existentialist understanding of history and the conviction, stemming from Kierkegaard's qualitative difference, that we cannot talk about God _pro se_, means that the issue at stake in preaching is the issue of present understanding of existence. Bultmann formally insists that preaching is the preaching of Christ as eschatological event, but this materially means the preaching of Christ is a challenge to present self-understanding.

One finds this theme running throughout Bultmann's conversation about preaching. For instance, in one context he insists that the concern of the response to preaching as personal address is not a decision about action, but a decision about self-understanding. He writes,

> . . . in the decision of faith I do not decide on a responsible action, but on a new understanding of myself as free from myself by the grace of God and as endowed with my new self.[462]

To be sure, responsible action follows the new self-understanding, but the manifest concern of preaching is not ethics, but existential understanding.

As indicated above, basic to Bultmann's idea of revelation is the insistence that revelation gives to man a new understanding of himself. Writing about the knowledge given in revelation, Bultmann says,

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[462] Bultmann, _History and Eschatology_, _op. cit._, p. 152.

> . . . there is indeed a knowledge that is also given in revelation, however little the latter is a supernatural arrangement for communicating remarkable doctrines. I am given a knowledge, namely, of myself, of my immediate now, in which and for which the word of proclamation is spoken to me.[463]

The encounter with the word of preaching is revelatory as an encounter that offers new self-understanding.

In various contexts, Bultmann insists that one basic contribution of the Apostle Paul was his concentration of the issues of the Christian faith on the question of new self-understanding. He writes, for instance, "Paul's conversion was the resolve to surrender his whole previous self-understanding, which was called in question by the Christian message, and to understand his existence anew."[464] According to Bultmann, Paul's distinctive contribution rests in the fact that ". . . he extricated Christian thinking from the realm of mythology and speculation and made it into an unfolding of the understanding of man, the world, and God that is given in faith itself."[465] It is important to note that Bultmann's order here places primary emphasis on the understanding of man.

Such an understanding of Paul's contribution informs Bultmann's interpretation of preaching in the Apostle. The concern of preaching turns to concern for the understanding of present life. Bultmann says in one place,

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[463] Bultmann, Existence and Faith, op. cit., p. 88.

[464] Ibid., p. 115.

[465] Ibid., p. 120.

> Paul was aware that the preaching of the cross is a scandal and folly. The question that it puts to us is whether we are ready to become aware of our nothingness before God and to receive life in the midst of our death. It asks us whether we are prepared to understand the meaning and goal of life not in terms of our world-views and plans, but on the basis of the Christian proclamation that encounters us as the Word of God.[466]

In another context Bultmann discusses Paul's concept of preaching and faith and the path is trod from the centrality of preaching for faith to the centrality of self-understanding as the issue involved in faith. He writes,

> . . . faith does not relate itself to historical or cosmic processes that could be established as free from doubt, but rather to the preaching behind which faith cannot go and which says to man that he must understand the cross as God's act of salvation and believe in the resurrection. Only in preaching is the cross God's saving act, and therefore the preaching that is based on the cross is itself God's act of salvation and revelation. . . . This preaching of God's saving act, however, is not a communication about events that one can also establish outside of faith; rather in speaking of God's act of salvation, it at the same time addresses the conscience of the hearer and asks him whether he is willing to understand the occurrence that it proclaims as occurring to himself and thereby to understand his existence in its light.[467]

Bultmann's exposition of the thought of Paul and John in The Theology of the New Testament is an extensive example of applying the question of self-understanding to the assertions of the kerygma of the New Testament. Bultmann is quite explicit in making the point that what is at stake is not just choosing to understand one's self in one of several possible ways but rather he insists that the issue hinges on man's response to the Word which encounters him in the proclamation of Jesus. But encounter with that proclamation focuses on the question of the new self-understanding given. Kerygma and self-understanding are the two key words throughout. Kerygma moves to the issue of self-understanding. But for self-understanding, kerygma is essential.[468]

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[466] Ibid., p. 201

[467] Ibid., p. 139.

The radical concentration on the question of self-understanding naturally elicits strong reactions from Bultmann's critics. Thielicke, for instance, says that Bultmann's concentration on self-understanding means that revelation is equated simply with a change in the subjective consciousness of man. He asserts,

> When the prologue of the Fourth Gospel says 'The Word became flesh' it means by 'flesh' not the historical fact in the manger in Bethlehem but the acquisition of a new understanding of human life which has its origin in that point of history. This would seem to be a legitimate interpretation of Bultmann's argument. The historical narratives of the New Testament are, to put it bluntly, not events in their own right, but only the prelude to an event. The real event is the change which takes place in the human self-consciousness.[469]

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[468] Cf., for instance, the discussion in Bultmann, The Theology of the New Testament, Vol. 1, p. 324 ff.; and Vol. II, p. 239 ff.

[469] Bartsch, Kerygma and Myth, op. cit., p. 147.

There are, to be sure, strains in Bultmann which make this reading of things a very apt one. Wingren argues that according to Bultmann the proclaimed word has no other content than 'authentic existence' after the Heideggerian mold.[470] And Schubert Ogden believes that Bultmann so elevates the category of self-understanding that he has reduced the entire content of traditional Christian confession to one fundamental assertion: "I henceforth understand myself no longer in terms of my past, but solely in terms of the future that is here and now disclosed to me as grace in my encounter with the church's proclamation."[471] From various corners one hears the allegation that Bultmann reduces theology to anthropology precisely because he insists that everything be referred back to the question of self-understanding. Bultmann's response to such a charge states, "Using 'anthropology' differently, I would heartily agree: I am trying to substitute anthropology for theology, for I am interpreting theological affirmations as assertions about human life."[472] Consistent with such a statement is Bultmann's repeated insistence that the substantial concern of preaching is proclaiming Jesus Christ as challenge to self-understanding. To miss this mark is to miss the essential mark of genuine preaching.

The radical concentration on self-understanding leaves Bultmann open to the charge of reductionism, and various critis make just such a charge.[473] But such charges should not obscure the fact that Bultmann's radical emphasis presents the preacher with a distinct challenge. Ian Henderson, reflecting positive response to Bultmann's concern for self-understanding, comments that

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[470] Wingren, Theology in Conflict, op. cit., p. 58.

[471] Ogden, Christ Without Myth, op. cit., p. 114.

[472] Bartsch, Kerygma and Myth, op. cit., p. 107.

> . . . many Christian preachers have deluded themselves into believing that they have preached challenging sermons when only their ignorance of life has kept them from seeing that what they set before their hearers was not a real possibility for the latter.[474]

Recognizing the vulnerability of Bultmann's concentration on self-understanding, it remains that he has elicited serious response and following just because at this very point he strikes at one quite vulnerable point in much theology and preaching, namely its manifest irrelevance.

4. Preaching as the Word of God. It is obvious from previous discussion that in repeated context where Bultmann speaks of preaching he speaks of preaching as the Word of God. Indeed, Bultmann can even at times echo something of Barth's three-fold form of the Word of God. In one of his essays, he writes, ". . . 'the Word become flesh' . . . is carried on in the Christian Church in the 'it is written', and is renewed from time to time in the spoken word of preaching; which meets

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[473] Cf. Malevez, The Christian Message and Myth, op. cit., p. 209 ff.; Owen, Revelation and Existence, op. cit., p. 91 ff.; Deim, Dogmatics, op. cit., p. 63 ff.; et al.

[474] Henderson, Myth in the New Testament, op. cit., p. 38.

us with the claim that it is to proclaim God's Word."[475] Bultmann does not proceed to develop a formal three-fold form of the Word, but the seeds for such are present. He does, in various contexts, affirm that the present preaching of the Church is the Word of God.

One important facet of Bultmann's emphasis on preaching as the Word of God is the recognition that faith is always related to the Word as present in preaching. It is the Word of preaching which heralds Jesus Christ as eschatological event that is both the ground and object of faith. As already discussed, faith does not rest on historical findings, but quite pointedly on the encounter with the Word of preaching. Faith, to be genuine faith, does not seek to go behind the kerygma for substantiation of 'facts'. It responds to the preached word. It should be further recognized that it is this insistence which keeps Bultmann's idea of faith as self-understanding from collapsing into pure subjectivism. There are those who fear that Bultmann's emphasis on self-understanding in reality simply delivers us back into the hands of the subjectivism of the 19th century. Barth, for instance, sees this as the logic of Bultmann's program.[476] But it must be acknowledged that Bultmann's pervasive emphasis on self-understanding is always related to self-understanding in response to the preached word. Faith hinges on a definite _verbum externum_ which is linked with a distinct and datable event, namely the event of Jesus of Nazareth. Hermann Diem, critical of Bultmann at many junctures, recognizes that for Bultmann faith is not pure subjectivity precisely because faith is response to the Word of God in the kerygma. Diem characterizes Bultmann's position in these words:

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[475] Bultmann, _Essays_, _op. cit_., p. 113.

[476] Bartsch, _Kerygma and Myth_, Vol. II, _op. cit_., p. 83 ff. Also in various contexts in _The Church Dogmatics_ Barth interprets Bultmann in terms of Scheilermacher.

> The proclamation of the Word of God in the kerygma of Scripture is rather a contingent event in which the Word meets me from without and thus constantly calls in question even my own power of belief. In this event of proclamation through which the Word by the Spirit creates belief, there is thus, in Bultmann's opinion, a constant movement from Word to faith, and this movement, on which everything depends appears sufficiently assured in its irreversibility.[477]

It is the affirmation that in preaching Jesus Christ as eschatological event God encounters the believer that protects Bultmann's existentialist hermeneutic from indefensible subjectivism. Malevez, a Roman Catholic interpreter of Bultmann, makes something of the same point in defending Bultmann against the charge of subjectivism. He writes,

> The real thought of Bultmann seems to be something like this: . . . subjective faith is the appropiation of an objective act, written in history, that is to say, the Cross of Christ proclaimed by the apostolic kerygma and the preaching of the Church.[478]

Suffice it to say that Bultmann's emphasis on preaching as the Word of God, making present the cross and resurrection as salvation event, is crucial for interpretation of faith as self-understanding. The self-understanding in question is not simply existentialist philosophy, but self-understanding in response to a definite word about a definite event.

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[477] Diem, Dogmatics, op. cit., p. 92.

[478] Malevez, The Christian Message and Myth, op. cit., p. 80.

A second important facet of the contention that preaching is the Word of God concerns Bultmann's understanding of Jesus as the Word. In grasping some idea of what Bultmann means in talk of Jesus as the Word we get a basic cue for the understanding of preaching as the Word of God. Bultmann does not utilize the categories of traditional Christology in speaking of Jesus as the Word. Rather his interpretation of Jesus leans heavily on the verbal activity of Jesus as the decisive factor of his presence. He insists that Jesus did not present himself as Messiah calling for belief in His person, but rather he came with a distinct prophetic note as the "bearer" of the Word of God. The early Church later invested Jesus with titles that acknowledge his Messianic significance, but in his own person Jesus came as bearer of the Word only.[479] His significance was in the first instance verbal significance, proclaiming the word which pointed beyond himself, calling for faith in God's reign. Bultmann avoids the attempt to describe Jesus' nature in terms of metaphysical substances, and further he contends that we cannot explore the question of self-consciousness of Jesus as Messiah. The latter question can only be answered, if at all, by the historian, and faith does not rest on the historian's findings. The significance of Jesus resides in the fact that he was bearer of a word announcing God's reign and calling for radical obedience. Man, confronted by the Word of God in Jesus, must henceforth decide for the world or for God. In other words, the Word of God is present in Jesus as word, verbal announcement.

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[479] Cf. the discussion of Jesus, Bultmann, The Theology of the New Testament, Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 3-32.

Gogarten underscores the significance of this understanding of the Word of God, insisting that Bultmann presents us with a theology which speaks of

> . . . the reality of revelation in such a manner that it is understood in the sense which is in accordance with the New Testament and with the principles of the Reformation, that is to say as the verbal (worthaft) reality, as the one reality which is the reality of the Word of God, and as nothing else.[480]

The argument is simply that Bultmann does not desire to employ the category of the Word of God in any "special" way since he takes "Word" for what it is, verbal activity. Gogarten adds the advice that Bultmann's critics

> . . . should allow him to direct their attention to the problem of the genus of the revelational reality, for in studying his work the question of the genus of the divine Word becomes a more urgent one than it is in the general run of theology where the Word of God seems to be taken quite as a matter of course. This Word is in truth a Word *sui generis*. . . . It is really, in the proper sense of the term, a Word.[481]

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[480] Gogarten, Demythologizing and History, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

[481] *Ibid.*, p. 86.

The emphasis on Word of God as verbal reality is crucial for understanding Bultmann's contention for preaching as the Word of God.

It can be put this way: The usual concentration on the Word of God is closely linked with the Johannine assertion, "The Word became flesh." From this statement, traditional Christology has proceeded to discuss the divine-human natures of Jesus as the incarnate Word. But Bultmann insists that the incarnate Word did not sacrifice its verbal character, and consequently he does not want to get involved in the metaphysical discussion of the divine-humane natures of Jesus Christ. The decisive reality of Jesus is his function as bearer of the Word of God. The concentration on the significance of Jesus for Bultmann revolves around his significance as verbal event. To be sure the cross as historical event is important, but important not in terms of some metaphysical-cosmological transaction enshrined in a doctrine of the atonement. Rather the significance of the cross resides in the fact that it is *proclaimed* as saving event, and only as it is proclaimed is it significant. In other words, questions of metaphysics, history, and doctrine are resolved in terms of verbal activity, as a word addressed to the hearer demanding decision, response, faith. On Bultmann's score it would perhaps be more accurate to say, "The Word became kerygma." The decisive activity of God is verbal activity, and that activity is continued in the preaching of the Church which is the present form of the Word of God. It should be marked that 'verbal activity' is not to be conceived simply as verbal transmission of information. The character of the decisive 'verbal activity' to which Bultmann refers consists of 'address', the form of 'verbal activity' which encounters the hearer as challenge demanding decision about his self-understanding.[482]

A third facet of Bultmann's emphasis on preaching as the Word of God stems from his understanding of "God as acting." His essay on this subject makes it clear that Bultmann has no room for the idea of God acting as God's intervention between the natural, or historical, or psychological course of events. He accepts the dictum of the modern scientific view of the world as a closed continuum of cause and effect and the action of God, on Bultmann's score, cannot be viewed as taking place as an irruption into this closed continuum.[483] God's action cannot be viewed as miracle which somehow sets aside or violates the operation of the closed continuum of cause and effect. Rather, Bultmann argues, "The action of God is hidden from every eye except the eye of faith."[484] He further contends that ". . . only such statements about God are legitimate as express the existential relation between God and man. Statements which speak of God's action as cosmic events are illegitimate."[485] The realm of God's action is limited to action of a personal nature, that which happens between God and Man. But then he goes on to assert that the vital center of the action between God and man is rooted in faith as "hearing." In an important paragraph Bultmann writes,

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[482] Cf. above, the discussion of 'Preaching as Kerygma'; Ebeling, in discussing Bultmann, writes, "In his use of the term 'kerygma', Bultmann is in the first place concerned to stress the character of proclamation as address, that is, as event. That speech about the 'fact' of Jesus Christ is constitutive for the kerygma should not be seen as being in opposition to this, but rather as being constitutive of the character of kerygma as 'word-event'." Theology and Proclamation, op. cit., pp. 42-43.

It should also be noted that Bultmann's essay "The Idea of God and Modern Man" (Rudolf Bultmann, et al., Translating Theology Into the Modern Age (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 83 ff.) raises a question about the above interpretation. In this essay Bultmann discusses various writers who seek to re-interpret the idea of God in non-metaphysical terms. In the concluding remarks of this essay Bultmann writes, "It then remains to keep oneself open at any time for the encounter with God in the world, in time. It is not the acknowledgement of an image of God, be it ever so correct, that is real faith in God; rather, it is the readiness for the eternal to encounter us at any time in the present--at any time in the varying situations of our life. . . . For surprisingly God can encounter us where we do not expect it." p. 94. And then in the concluding paragraph Bultmann refers to the parable of the last judgement in Matthew 25:31-46 which has to do with the encounter with the dispossessed, the hungry, the naked, the imprisoned, and the sick as the realm of encounter with God. No reference is made in this essay to 'encounter' through the word of 'address' in the kerygma. This perhaps suggests that 'encounter' is a wider concept in Bultmann, and 'address' is one decisive form of 'encounter' with God.

> Is it enough to say that faith grows out of the encounter with the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God, that faith is nothing but simple hearing? The answer is yes. But this answer is valid only if the Scriptures are understood neither as a manual of doctrine nor as a record of witnesses to faith which I interpret by sympathy and empathy. On the contrary, to hear the Scriptures as the Word of God means to hear them as a word which is addressed to me, as _kerygma_, as a proclamation.[486]

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[483] It is not the place here to enter into the discussion of the adequacy of the idea that contemporary science operates with the conception of the world as 'closed continuum'. At several vital points Bultmann's reading of the situation and mentality of so-called "modern man" is open to serious question.

[484] Bultmann, _Jesus Christ and Mythology_, _op. cit._, pp. 61-62.

[485] _Ibid._, p. 69.

[486] _Ibid._, p. 71.

The understanding of God as acting is more and more focused on verbal activity, address and hearing. God's act turns not on some act in the past, but on the present act of address.

Bultmann goes on to address the question concerning God's act once and for all on behalf of the world. Does his emphasis on the present denigrate the significance of God's once for all action in Jesus Christ? His reply emphasizes that the significance of the once for all action rests not in some timeless idea of God's action, but in the decisiveness of God's action for us in the present. He writes,

> It should be clear from what we have said that we are not speaking of an idea of God but of the living God in whose hands our time lies, and who encounters us here and now. Therefore, we can make answer to the objection in the single affirmation that God meets us in His Word, in a concrete word, the preaching instituted in Jesus Christ.[487]

Here again we meet the contention that the significant aspect of the event of Jesus Christ rests not in some definition of divine nature, nor in some cosmological conception of atonement which statically defines the work of Christ. Rather, the significant aspect of the event of Jesus Christ is verbal activity, the institution of the preaching that derives from Him. The decisive character of the act of God is in His action of speaking. Bultmann writes,

> While it may be said that God meets us always and everywhere, we do not see and hear Him always and everywhere, unless

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[487] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

> His Word supervenes and enables us to understand the moment here and now. . .[488]

The idea of God in his omnipresence and omnipotence becomes real only in the event where the Word is spoken. Bultmann contends,

> . . . it must be said that the Word of God is what it is only in the moment in which it is spoken. The Word of God is not a timeless statement but a concrete word addressed to men here and now.[489]

Bultmann acknowledges that God's word is a real word spoken in human language, in the preaching of the Church or in the Bible viewed as a word of address. The event of Jesus Christ gives authority and legitimation to the word spoken in preaching or Bible, but the vital center of the action of God rests not in the past, but in the present verbal activity of the Word preached. The overall effect of Bultmann's argument is to narrow the field of God's action to the realm of the spoken word of address. The significance of the cross, for instance, does not reside in the fact that it was the cross of Christ as such, but rather in the fact that the cross is preached as saving word. God's action does not center on what happened on Golgotha, but rather in the present event of preaching that heralds the cross as God's act of salvation. The reality of grace hinges on what happens here and now between the preached word and the hearer. Bultmann writes, ". . . there is no other possibility of God's forgiveness becoming real for man than the word. In the word, and not otherwise, does Jesus bring forgiveness."[490] That decisive word is continued in the preaching of the church today.

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[488] *Ibid*., pp. 78-79.

[489] *Ibid*., p. 79.

In the preceding discussion three facets of Bultmann's idea of the Word of God have been emphasized. (1) Faith is related not to historical assurances ~~nor~~ doctrinal summaries, but to the Word as preached. (2) The understanding of Jesus as Word of God is to be sought in the understanding of Jesus as verbally significant. The Word of God in Jesus is present as word. (3) The idea of 'God acting' is to be understood in terms of God acting in the realm of address. God's present-acting is verbal activity, that is address and hearing. These three lines of thought prepare the ground for rather elaborate statements about preaching as the present form of the Word of God. Faith, in being related to Word, is substantially related to the present word of preaching in which the Word of God's grace confronts the hearer demanding faith or unbelief. Further, as the realm of God's action in Jesus was the realm of word, so now the decisive realm of God's action centers in the word of preaching instituted by that event of the Word of Jesus.

Present throughout the structure of Bultmann's writings one finds repeated insistence that the Word of God comes to expression in the present word of preaching. In replying to his critics in the debate on demythologizing Bultmann argues,

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[490] Bultmann, Jesus and the Word (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 219.

> The Word of God is what it is only in event, and the paradox lies in the fact that this Word is identical with the Word which originated in the apostolic preaching, which has been fixed in Scripture and which is handed on by men in the Church's proclamation. . .[491]

And significantly, Bultmann adds to this statement a footnote which claims,

> In other words, a man just like myself speaks to me the Word of God: in him the Word of God becomes incarnate. For the incarnation is likewise an eschatological event and not a datable event of the past; it is an event which is continually being re-enacted in the event of proclamation.[492]

Certainly such a way of putting things may arouse pertinent questions, but it remains that such an affirmation echoes Bultmann's concern that the Word of God be interpreted in terms of present event, and further that preaching is the present event where the Word of God occurs.

The same theme is sounded in Bultmann's discussion of the Christological confession of the World Council of Churches. There he addresses the question of revelation, and writes,

> Revelation does not occur in the imparting of an idea of God and of the idea of divine grace, but in a concrete historical man, and is renewed at any given time in the preaching of concrete historical men, who preach God always as my God, . . . "in Christ's stead, in that God calls us."[493]

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[491] Bartsch, Kerygma and Myth, op. cit., p. 209.

[492] Ibid., p. 209.

[493] Bultmann, Essays, op. cit., p. 287.

Revelation as the Word of God is an event occurring now in the concrete event of preaching.

The emphasis on preaching as the decisive present Word of God occurs in a slightly different form in the Gifford lectures of Bultmann. There, in discussion of Jesus Christ as eschatological event Bultmann insists, "Jesus Christ is the eschatological event not as an established fact of past time but as repeatedly present, as addressing you and me here and now in preaching."[494] Characteristic of Bultmann's insistence on the present significance of Jesus as salvation-event is the focusing of the question of present significance on the reality of the Word of God addressing us in the present preaching of Christ.

In previous contexts we have had occasion to indicate how Bultmann sees the preaching of the salvation event as an integral part of that event, without which it would not be what it is. In his Theology of the New Testament Bultmann poses the question as to how the salvation-occurrence can be understood as an occurrence directed at man, reaching him, and happening to him. His reply states,

> It takes place in the word, which accosts the hearer and compels him to decide for or against it . . . in the word of proclamation Christ's death-and-resurrection becomes a possibility of existence in regard to which a decision must be made. . .[495]

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[494] Bultmann, History and Eschatology, op. cit., pp. 151-152.

[495] Bultmann, The Theology of the New Testament, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 302.

God's action in the Word, in this scheme, is not located in past occurrence, but in the present event of preaching. The word of preaching is the decisive realm of God's saving encounter with man, and as it is such one can speak of preaching as the Word of God.

It would not be difficult to quote extensively from Bultmann's various works indicating how in many different contexts the dynamic event of the Word of God occurs in the dynamic event of the quite human words of the preacher who heralds Jesus Christ as the eschatological event. H. P. Owen aptly summarizes the issue in these words:

> In place of the Word as a divine being co-substantial with the Father we are given a Word of address (Anrede) that the Father speaks. In place of Christ as the Incarnation of divine being we are given Christ as the human figure through whom the Father's Word is spoken. Because Bultmann identifies the Word with the "spoken Word" he can make the astonishing assertion that when a man, or a preacher, addresses to me the Word "in him the Word of God becomes incarnate."[496]

In such a scheme the only Word of God we can know now centers around the event in which one speaks to another the word of the salvation-occurrence in Jesus Christ. Classically such speaking has as its primary referent the event of preaching.[497] There are manifest criticisms to be made of

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[496] H. P. Owen, Revelation and Existence, op. cit., p. 27.

[497] Bultmann does address himself to the fact that this does not thereby limit preaching to the "official minister," and he even allows that there is room for viewing "silent action" as a means of address. It remains, however, that the burden of his concern has to do with the word of address. Cf. Bultmann, "Preaching: Genuine and Secularized," in Leibrecht, Religion and Culture, op. cit., p. 242.

Bultmann's total theological program, as is quite evident from the voluminous literature devoted to discussion of various facets of his writing. But with all the reaction, one can not escape the fact that he is pivotally concerned with the possibility of understanding the event of preaching as the present Word of God. One writer suggests that Bultmann's hermeneutical suggestions ". . . offer to the Church a restored unity between the word of preaching and the Word of God."[498]

E. Summary statement. Various facets of Bultmann's theological concerns have been traced in the effort to discern why an imminent New Testament critical scholar devotes such extensive attention to the event of preaching. Attention has been given to the decisive influence of Bultmann's concept of revelation and the way in which this leads to the manifest focus on present kerygma as the event of revelation. Then an attempt has been made to assess the way in which Bultmann as historical-critical scholar converts basically negative historical conclusions into a positive emphasis on the function of preaching. Subsequently discussion has been devoted to the influence of Bultmann's Lutheranism in the shaping of his theology, marking the fact that stemming from this influence Bultmann's 'first principle' was a concern for preaching Jesus Christ as Lord. Also Bultmann's radicalizing of the Lutheran emphasis on justification by faith and soteriology resulted in an elevation of the pro me emphasis in the Gospel, led to a concentration on anthropology in theological discussions, and laid the groundwork for the acceptance of existentialism as the handmaiden of theology. All of these influences from Bultmann's Lutheranism lay the groundwork for a concentrated emphasis on the decisive function of preaching, or present kerygma. Finally, an attempt has been made to delineate Bultmann's major theological assertions concerning preaching, marking particularly his emphasis on preaching as eschatological event, preaching as 'kerygma', preaching as challenge to self-understanding, and preaching as the Word of God.

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[498] George C. Stuart, "Demythologizing and Preaching," Encounter, XIX (Spring, 1958), 139.

It is now the concern of this essay to seek to respond to the concentration on preaching found in both Barth and Bultmann, and to that task the final chapter is devoted.

CHAPTER IV

PREACHING AS ETHICAL ACTION: A RESPONSE TO BARTH AND BULTMANN

In the preceding discussion an attempt has been made to examine the elaborate focus on preaching found in the theologies of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann. Certain judgements have been made concerning why each man focuses so centrally on preaching, and subsequently attention has been given to basic theological affirmations concerning preaching. The task at hand now is to seek to respond to the concentration on preaching in Barth and Bultmann from the specific standpoint of practical theology, more specifically from the standpoint of homiletical concerns on the American scene.

The thesis of the response to be made in the following pages is that there is need to move beyond the prevailing epistemological framework for discussion of preaching as found in Barth and Bultmann to a discussion of preaching as a part of the church's ethical response to the gospel. While legitimacy must be granted for the epistemological concerns of Barth's early endeavors and Bultmann's particular inquiries, my argument is that there is both need and basis for understanding preaching in terms of ethical action. The argument for preaching as a form of ethical action stems from cues given in the study of Barth and Bultmann and seeks both to make more explicit these cues and to expand upon them from the viewpoint of practical theology.

The procedure to be followed in developing the above thesis will be to discuss first basic judgements implicit in the statement of the thesis; second, to offer several criticisms of the discussion of preaching in Barth and Bultmann; and third, through appropriation of emphasis in Barth and Bultmann to examine in some detail what is involved in defining preaching as a part of the church's ethical response to the gospel.

A. Basic judgements: The thesis as stated argues that the discussion of preaching in Barth and Bultmann goes forward in a prevailing framework of epistemology. It is not my argument that this is an exclusive framework, but it is my conclusion that the focus on preaching is closely correlated to the manifest epistemological concerns that occupied the attention of Barth in his early endeavors and Bultmann in his particular concerns. Barth in the first volume of the Church Dogmatics seeks to answer the question of how man knows God. He rejects the structures of the nineteenth century answer to the question which focused heavily on man's religious feelings, stemming primarily from Schleiermacher's theology, (at least as Schleiermacher is interpreted by Barth). He also rejects 18th century orthodoxy with its unwarranted (according to Barth) focus on the salvation of the individual and inherent Biblicism. He does find in the Reformers and Anselm basic cues which lead to the prevailing emphasis that the question of man's knowledge of God is answered by God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. Preaching becomes correlate of revelation inasmuch as it is in the event of church proclamation as human endeavor coupled with the self-witness of Jesus Christ that revelation becomes a present reality. It is within the framework of the epistemological question of man's knowledge of God that Barth develops his threefold form of the Word of God. Preaching in this scheme performs an epistemological function. Proclamation, the third form of the Word of God, based on Scripture, the second form of the Word, is the present form of the first form of the Word, namely God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. In all three forms of the Word knowledge of God is the crucial issue. In such a line of development it is argued that preaching is discussed primarily from the perspective of the question of epistemology.

The epistemological framework of Bultmann's concerns is not as clearly defined. Indeed, it may be more to the point to put epistemology in quotation marks when discussing Bultmann. Nevertheless, Bultmann's prevailing emphasis on "understanding" gives basis for arguing that he too discusses preaching in the context of epistemology. From Barth Bultmann learned that the essence of the Christian faith does not consist of an attitude of the soul, but in its relation to its object, God's revelation.[499] Bultmann, of course, defines revelation in significantly different ways from Barth, but it remains that the question of knowledge is paramount. In Bultmann's case revelation is not defined in terms of knowledge of God, but rather as knowledge of self, manifestly "self-understanding." For Bultmann the event of revelation which affords self-understanding cannot be derived from historical research documenting the dimensions of the event of revelation in the past, but rather revelation is a present encounter. And it is preaching which is the locus of the event of present revelation. The reality of Jesus Christ is present in preaching, as an eschatological event, and the issue of the event of revelation in preaching is self-understanding. In this scheme the epistemological question revolves around 'knowledge' of self.

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[499] Supra, p. 160.

The question of how man "knows" is basic to both the concerns of Barth and Bultmann, the issue being "knowledge of God" for Barth, and "self-understanding" for Bultmann. And in both cases it is the event of preaching that provides the occasion for knowledge in the present. The epistemological question is answered by the emphasis on revelation, and the event of revelation is a present reality in preaching. It is along these lines that the judgement is forwarded that both Barth and Bultmann discuss preaching in an epistemological framework.

The second judgement in the stated thesis argues for a shift in the discussion of preaching from theological definition of preaching derived from epistemological concerns to deliberate consideration of preaching as a form of ethical action. It is the judgement of the thesis that the concerns of preaching today require investigation of the ethics of preaching. The shift to the context of ethics means a turn to deliberate interest in the kind of human behaviour involved in preaching. If ethics poses the question, "What ought (or are) we do to in response to faith in the Gospel?", and proceeds to investigate specific forms of human behaviour as to their appropriateness, goodness, rightness, or integrity as obedient behaviour, then it is certainly appropriate to examine the concrete human behaviour of the preacher in the vital area of preaching as an ethical question.

In seeking to frame a vital facet of my response to the focus on preaching in Barth and Bultmann in the insistence that preaching be examined as a form of ethical action basic cues are taken from Barth. Barth himself does not strongly emphasize or expand upon the consideration of preaching as ethical action. But the cues are there and it is my contention that they should be enlarged upon. At least three factors in Barth's thought give impetus to more deliberate exploration of the action of preaching as ethical action.

First, it is axiomatic in interpreting Barth to underscore the insistence that ethics is a germane part of dogmatics. In an extended discussion in the first volume of the Church Dogmatics Barth makes his case for the inclusion of ethics in the context of dogmatic discussion, arguing specifically that to establish an independent discipline of theological ethics involves serious shortcomings.[500] He writes, in this context,

> . . . where ethics has . . . been able to secure independence, the fact has always had to be reckoned with that an independent ethics has always shown at once a tendency to reverse the roles, replacing dogmatics as the basic theological discipline, absorbing dogmatics into itself, transforming it into an ethical system with a Christian foundation, and then penetrating the controlling Biblical exegesis and pastoral theology in the same way. Since independent ethical systems are always in the last resort determined

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[500] C.D. I 2, p. 782 ff.

> by general anthropology, this inevitably means that dogmatics itself and theology as a whole simply becomes applied anthropology.[501]

He argues further that if dogmatics and ethics are separated into two independent disciplines dogmatics incurs definite limitations and runs the risk of being ". . . no more than an idle intellectual frivolity."[502] The question of concrete human behaviour must be incorporated into dogmatic discussion if dogmatics is to be true to its nature. In another context Barth moves to discussion of particular questions of ethical action with the insistence that "The question of the Word of God in Christian proclamation, and therefore dogmatics, embraces necessarily the ethical question as well, i.e., the question of what is good human behaviour."[503] Consistently Barth argues that dogmatics has to do not simply with the objective side of revelation, but pointedly with the subjective appropriation of revelation and that involves the issue of what is good human behaviour. The revelation of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Reconciler includes the command of God, and the issue of the command of God means taking up the question of specific human action in particular situations. Barth insists, "The command of God does not hang ineffectively in the air above man. Its particular aim and concern are with him in his real activity."[504] In these contexts Barth does not move to an explicit discussion of the human behaviour involved in preaching as one of the areas to be explored in ethical discussion. But an important cue is given. If dogmatics espouses a particular theological definition of preaching, which we have discerned as vitally present in Barth (and Bultmann as well), then it is germane to investigate the question of good human behaviour consistent with the theological affirmations and that means consideration of the ethics of preaching.

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[501] C.D. I 2, pp. 782-783.

[502] C.D. I 2, p. 787.

[503] C.D. III 4, p. 3.

[504] C.D. III 4, p. 5.

Closely akin to what has been written above is the consistent emphasis in Barth's theology of preaching that preaching is commissioned or commanded by the Word of God. This is the second cue in Barth for consideration of preaching as ethical action. The command of God points to specific human behaviour and involves therewith the question of ethics. With all his lofty affirmations about preaching as a form of the Word of God, Barth in no way seeks to eliminate the human activity involved in preaching. But it is quite clear that that human activity proceeds under the command of God. It would, therefore, seem quite appropriate, on Barth's own score, to examine the commissioned human activity of preaching under the general rubrics of ethical inquiry. If the command of God involves preaching then it is pertinent to pursue what is good human behaviour in obedience to this command, and that, as I understand Barth, represents the essential concern of Christian ethics.

The third cue taken from Barth arises from his discussion of the vocation of the Christian community as witness where Barth includes preaching as a form of the Church's multiform ministry of witness.[505]

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[505] C.D. IV 3, p. 481 ff.

In that context Barth argues that the concept of witness is ". . . the basic concept in the doctrine of the command of God as we return to it in the context of the doctrine of reconciliation. In other words, it will be the controlling principle of the second form of Christian ethics."[506] Again it should be marked that no elaborate case is made for discussion of preaching as a form of ethical action in this context, but the cue is given, and it is the argument of this paper that this cue, along with the others discussed above, needs to be taken more seriously and that the human activity of preaching needs to be more deliberately included in the spectrum of ethical concerns.

Another facet in the attempt to define preaching in terms of ethical action has to do with the particular situation in which we find ourselves in America. It may have been quite pertinent and necessary for Barth and Bultmann to focus centrally on the epistemological question at the beginning of the 20th century, and indeed one must recognize the legitimate basis for continuing discussion of epistemology. But it remains that in the latter part of the 20th century, particularly in the American situation, the question of ethics has moved to a position of central concern. In quite extensive ways the question of appropriate Christian action has become the focus of much of the church's concern. Of course, it is true that ethical conversation has been discussed primarily in terms of "morality," or "new morality," in terms of social issues, of war, economics, family, state, justice, sex, race, etc., and not in terms of preaching. But it is my argument that it is manifestly appropriate to include the specific human action of preaching in the catalogue of ethical concerns. The sermon is one of the most consistent forms of human activity practiced by the church and to fail to consider this action as a part of the ethical action of the church reflects a mistaken understanding of preaching. It may well represent the view that preaching is either meaningless activity, or is to be considered only from the objective side of what God does in preaching. Either alternative is faulty.

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[506] C.D. IV 3, p. 610., cf. supra, p. 117 ff.

It occurs to me that the failure to define preaching in terms of ethical action may well have much to do with the manifest disillusionment with preaching today. It hardly needs to be documented that in both contemporary renewal literature and practice few see the sermon as the place "where the action is." In spite of the lofty claims made for preaching in the major works of Barth and Bultmann and in the resulting discussion of preaching and hermeneutics in contemporary theology, it remains that there is in the United States widespread disillusionment with preaching as a pertinent facet of the church's life today. Perhaps this is rooted in the fact that we have wrapped preaching in some kind of theological mystique, continue it out of custom or habit, but fail to see it as a germane facet of the church's obedient ethical response to the gospel. My argument is simply that within the theological definition of preaching as set forth in Barth and Bultmann there is legitimate basis for a deliberate understanding of preaching as appropriate ethical action, and that such consideration may set the stage for a more positive evaluation of preaching today.

B. Critique of the emphasis on preaching in Barth and Bultmann.

In the following comments limited criticism of the emphasis on preaching in Barth and Bultmann is forwarded. No attempt is here made to summarize the wide variety of critique of the two men. The issues discussed reflect my judgement of several basic issues that have particular bearing on the understanding and practice of preaching.

1. The first criticism forwarded has to do with the central focus on revelation in the two men. Previous study has suggested that basic to the theologies of both Barth and Bultmann is the emphasis on revelation, distinctly defined by each, with the accompanying definition of preaching as correlate of revelation. For reasons stated below it can be argued that the focal emphasis on revelation is open to challenge at several points, and further that the resulting understanding of preaching as correlate of revelation is problematical at certain fundamental points.

Certainly one of the most consistent notes of theology in the 20th century is its emphasis on revelation. Writers of various theological persuations and traditions find it necessary to place the fact of revelation at the heart of any effort to theologize today. In 1937 John Baillie writing in the preface to a collection of essays on revelation says,

> It would appear then that the topic of revelation is of the first order of urgency as regards the Church's total task in the present age. Ample evidence of a widespread recognition of this fact may

> be found in the degree of attention which theologians of all lands and communions are at present devoting to the subject.[507]

In the succeeding decades revelation has continued to occupy a central position in the concerns of contemporary theology. In 1966 Carl Braaten states the case in the following way:

> Every modern Protestant theology, regardless of which category shapes its thinking, has felt obliged to establish itself as a theology of revelation, as if thereby it has achieved all that matters or what matters most. There is no doubt that any theology which deserves to be called Christian will include the notion that man's knowledge of God presupposes God's revelation of himself.[508]

The case for doing theology from the central presupposition of revelation has pretty generally carried the day in contemporary theology.

However, there are reasons to question the prevailing concentration on revelation. One very basic reason derives from the fact that it cannot be argued conclusively that revelation is a Biblical category, at least in terms of the way revelation is used in contemporary theology. James Barr contends that "In the Bible . . . the usage of the terms which roughly correspond to 'revelation' is both limited and specialized."[509] His brief survey of the ways in which words corresponding to 'revelation' are used in the Bible leads him to conclude that ". . . there is little basis in the Bible for the use of 'revelation' as a general term for man's source of knowledge of God, or for all real communication from God to man."[510] He adds that this is not just a terminological argument and suggests,

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[507] John Baillie & Hugh Martin, ed., Revelation (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), p. x.

[508] Carl Braaten, History and Hermeneutics (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), p. 12.

[509] James Barr, Old and New in Interpretation (London: SCM Press, 1966), p. 88.

> If in fact the idea of revelation had been built into the understanding of human contact with God in biblical times as it is in modern theology, one would have expected a much higher incidence of revelational terminology in the Bible than is in fact found.[511]

Barr goes on to say that one can suspect that 'revelation' has moved to a position of central importance in the effort to answer particular problems in the 20th century, which may be legitimate, but in doing so one should recognize that the claims for 'revelation' in contemporary theology do not square with the biblical scheme of things.

In a more extensive study F. Gerald Downing conducts a lexical survey of Old Testament, New Testament, and early Christian writings in search of words that operate roughly in the way that contemporary theology seeks to utilize 'revelation'. His conclusion concurs with Barr's. Of Old Testament writers he says,

> The Old Testament writers do not then find this word (reveal, or its cognates) itself very important for describing God's activity towards his world, mankind, Israel . . . . They never use it of God's making possible a 'knowledge of himself', nor of God 'revealing himself'. They do not build round it any 'concept' or revelation.[512]

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[510] _Ibid_., p. 88.

[511] _Ibid_., p. 88.

[512] F. Gerald Downing, _Has Christianity a Revelation?_ (London: SCM Press, 1964), p. 27.

His investigation of New Testament writers in their use of words that might suggest 'revelation' as used in contemporary theology leads to a similar conclusion. He writes, "Revelation, in any of its modern theological uses, as a major term (or even the sole adequate term) with which to convey the purpose of the life, death, resurrection of Jesus, does not occur in the New Testament."[513] Such conclusions as those drawn by Barr and Downing may well be open to debate. Indeed, C. F. D. Moule, writing in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, appears to conclude that there is Biblical evidence for the idea of revelation in terms of "unveiling," as God's self-revelation. But it can be argued that Moule's article works, as does much contemporary theology, with the presupposition of revelation as the event of God's making himself known.[514] Carl Braaten in questioning "the inflation of revelation" in theology today readily acknowledges that it is not the case that the Bible seeks to convey the God-man relation in terms of revelation, involving as it does the idea that man's basic need is 'knowledge'.[515] It is not my concern to decide finally whether or not the use of 'revelation' in contemporary theology is or is not true to Biblical usage. It can be acknowledged, however, that the question is an open one and that there is convincing evidence that the prevailing category of 'revelation' may well be based far more in the matrix of 20th century epistemological questions than it is in the matrix of Biblical testimony.

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[513] Ibid., p. 123.

[514] George Buttrick, ed., Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. IV (New York; Abindgon, 1962), p. 54 ff.

[515] Carl Braaten, op. cit., p. 14.

It is important to recall at this point the observation made in the study of Barth to the effect that the presuppositions of Volume I of the Church Dogmatics rest primarily on citations from the Reformers, and not from exegesis of Scripture.[516] While maintaining consistently the necessity of a Biblically based dogmatics it is quite pertinent to note that the presuppositions in the Prolegomena are not derived from the kind of exegetical discussion one finds in other sections of the Church Dogmatics. One can argue that it is quite appropriate for a Prolegomena to set forth basic presuppositions of a philosophical or theological nature, and that is what happens in the first volume of the Church Dogmatics. But it should be recognized that in so doing Barth runs the risk of establishing a non-biblical category as a controlling factor in subsequent Biblical interpretation and dogmatic formulation. Texts are examined in terms of their function as witness to revelation. Consistently in Barth the question involved in the investigation of texts turns on the question of texts as witness to revelation. Revelation is the controlling category of inquiry, but that all texts seek to speak in just this way to the question of revelation is a massive theological presupposition and not the result of exegesis itself, and there is no consistent effort to establish the presupposition of revelation from exegesis.

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[516] Supra, p. 38 ff.

It is true that Bultmann devotes attention to the idea of revelation in the New Testament in his essay, "The Concept of Revelation in the New Testament."[517] But the essay does not significantly seek to explore whether or not the New Testament speaks of revelation as used in modern theology. Rather Bultmann assumes the fact of revelation and poses the question of how the New Testament views revelation in response to two alternative definitions of revelation arbitrarily given at the beginning of the essay. The issue for Bultmann is whether the New Testament in speaking of revelation views revelation as 1) communication of knowledge by the word, or 2) as an occurrence that puts me in a new situation as a self.[518] As indicated in earlier discussion of Bultmann he opts for the second alternative and proceeds to show how various New Testament material might fit this definition of revelation. A particular definition of revelation is accepted as presupposition without seriously questioning whether or not the New Testament writers lend themselves to putting the question in terms of revelation at all. The point is simply this--no effort is made to establish from the New Testament materials the legitimacy of utilization of the category of 'revelation', however defined.

Thus on this score, to begin with, there is reason for reexamination of the concentration on revelation as found in Barth and

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[517] Rudolf Bultmann, Existence and Faith, op. cit., p. 58 ff.

[518] Ibid., p. 59.

Bultmann: the category of revelation is presupposed, but the exegetical grounds for this presupposition are problematic, at least, and deficient, at most.

A second difficulty with the central focus on revelation resides in the fact that it is confusing. This assertion is in line with the statements just made about Bultmann. His essay on revelation is a typical example of the use of revelation in contemporary theology. Everything depends on the particular way one defines revelation. Both Barth and Bultmann are established as theologians of revelation. But from that point wide divergence begins to appear and theology proceeds along significantly different lines of development. The basic issue seems to revolve around the particular way one chooses to define revelation, which would seem to imply that there is no common ground of understanding for the word 'revelation'. Barth uses the word in such a way as to talk of "knowledge of God" assuming that the unveiling accomplished in the event of Jesus Christ enables us to speak of God _pro se_. Bultmann, however, insists that we cannot speak of God _pro se_, but only _pro me_, and thus revelation has as its focus self-knowledge or self-understanding. Jurgen Moltmann points out that both Barth and Bultmann bring specific theological traditions to the situation and then seek to argue from a _concept_ of revelation to establish particular ways of speaking of revelation, without first seeking the references and bearing of the words for revelation in the Old and New Testament.[519] The point is that everything seems to hinge on the particular definition of the word 'revelation' the theologian chooses. The argument for revelation proceeds from a concept, but there is little general agreement as to what that concept involves. The confusion stemming from the use of 'revelation' with the manifestly divergent definitions found in Barth and Bultmann is typical of contemporary theology. Downing documents the confusion attendant in use of the category 'revelation' as it appears in various theological endeavors of the 20th century. He suggests that one might receive a general agreement that revelation means "revelation of God himself," but after that any unity of thought is shattered as each man or group of men applies a peculiar concept of 'revelation'. He concludes,

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[519] Jurgen Moltmann, _The Theology of Hope_ (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 44-45.

> This, then, is the first of the major problems with 'revelation'. What is the meaning of the word, when it is used to describe the source of such volumes of disagreement? In what sense, if any, can propositions or events be said to 'reveal' anything or anyone, if the actual result is this confusion and obscurity and misunderstanding?[520]

At least, one can conclude that the widespread agreement on utilization of the category of 'revelation' does not carry with it a corresponding agreement as to what is involved by recourse to 'revelation' as the source for doing theology today. It would appear that 'revelation' is at one and the same time sufficiently sophisticated to receive central attention and sufficiently ambiguous to give wide range for importing one's particular presuppositions. The confusion arising from the divergent uses of 'revelation' raises questions as to its adequacy for meeting the problems which face us today.

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[520] Downing, op. cit., p. 13.

A third difficulty with the use of 'revelation' resides in the fact that it lends itself to undue concentration on the question of epistemology. It is not the argument here that epistemology is an unimportant facet in theological endeavors. It is, however, my argument that the focus on 'revelation' has a tendency to make the primary question for man the question of knowledge, and to turn the Christian faith into a noetic entity. Carl Braaten contends that the inflation of revelation in modern theology can be traced to the heightened epistemological consciousness introduced into theology by Kant's critiques of reason. Braaten adds,

> Modern man--whoever he is--seems less concerned with what the theologian has to say than whether he can say anything at all. The question "How do you know?" is always the first question the theologian is asked. Thus, when the problem of religious knowledge becomes central in theology, the idea of revelation, as the answer to this question, becomes correspondingly dominant.[521]

It is not difficult to see the cogency of such words when we turn to 'revelation' as employed by Barth and Bultmann.

Barth does concern himself fundamentally with the question of man's knowledge of God. The basic outline of his thought is well known. Man does not know God, is void of knowledge of God, and cannot ascertain knowledge of God from 'natural revelation'. It is only in God's choice to reveal himself that man is given the possibility of knowledge of God. "The Word became flesh"--that is the foundation of the possibility of speaking of God. It is fundamental to this scheme that man be defined in terms of lack of understanding of God. This in turn establishes the groundwork for defining Jesus Christ as revelation which provides knowledge of God. One can argue that at least in Barth's earlier works the event of Incarnation is kept pretty much in an epistemological strait jacket. In later endeavors Barth moves beyond this narrow description of the problem in developing the doctrine of creation, and reconciliation. Wingren argues that Barth is deficient in his theology of the cross and resurrection, focusing as he does on the occurrence of Incarnation as the answer to man's lack of knowledge of God.[522] While there is a measure of truth in the charge, it does not seem to me that Wingren is justified in saying that Barth neglects the significance of sin and justification. Nevertheless it remains that there are elements in Barth which give legitimacy to the accusation that the emphasis on revelation does make the epistemological question paramount. Wingren is true to basic lines of development in the first volumes of the _Church Dogmatics_ when he argues, ". . . with Barth the main question is whether we have knowledge of God, or whether in ourselves we lack such knowledge and must receive it from outside."[523] At least it is fair to conclude that the concentration on 'revelation' is highly conducive to a concentration on the question of knowledge.

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[521] Braaten, op. cit., p. 12.

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[522] Wingren, _op. cit._, p. 109, p. 31 ff.

[523] _Ibid._, p. 26.

There are some who accuse Barth's concentration on 'revelation' of being "intellectualistic."[524] It seems to me that this is perhaps overstating the case. It is true that Barth appeals to the intellect, but it is equally true that man is an intellectual creature. That does not suffice as a full description of the complexities of man, to be sure, but certainly man's intellect is not to be degraded. The arguments against Barth as "intellectualistic" appeal to man's intellect! And it is unfair to Barth to charge that he sees man as only "intellectual" and makes the appeal of the gospel solely on that basis. But it does remain that the concentration on revelation tends to give to the gospel a one-sided noetic quality. Barth's sermons frequently conclude with a prevailing appeal to the intellect. Consistent with his theology his sermons are primarily "indicative" in nature, and it occurs that the issue on the sermon is often cast in noetic terms. One sermon concludes with the affirmation, "In consequence, we, his children, may never be ashamed. This we may know, this may be our strength. . "[525] Another, on the text Deuteronomy 12:8 comes to the end with these words,

> And with great confidence I assure you that you may not only believe, you may also know that this is true--the Lord our

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[524] Cf. Downing, op. cit., p. 255 where he uses the phrase "incurably intellectualistic." Also cf. Barr, op. cit., p. 92; Wingren, op. cit., p. 123.

[525] Karl Barth, Deliverance to the Captives (New York: Harper, 1961), p. 49.

> God has never failed anyone who prayed for power and strength to remember him. Amen. (italics Barth's)[526]

Another focuses on teaching and telling something in these words, "Let me give you the plainest answer: God teaches us by telling us and by letting us hear of the twofold power . . ." (italics Barth's)[527] Still another concentrates on the wonder of being told of knowledge of God's revelation in this manner: "This I did not know. This nobody ever told me. This I could never have found out by myself."[528] There is, of course, quite legitimate basis for seeing the sermon as the occasion for "telling" and for finding confidence in the assurance of "knowing." But where the appeal is consistently to the mind, where the emphasis is repeatedly on "telling" and "knowing" one may begin to ask questions about a one-sided noetic concentration. It seems to be that both Barth's dogmatics and his sermons do set at the forefront of theology's concerns the question of 'knowledge' to the neglect of man's total willing-emotional-spiritual condition, and this is a consequence of the basic choice to cast theology in terms of the question of epistemology, with corresponding concentration on 'revelation'.

It would perhaps be assumed that Bultmann would escape the charge of being overly noetic in his particular brand of revelational theology. His recourse to existentialist categories and his focus on soteriology might seem to avoid the more obvious epistemological cast of Barth's theology. But in my judgement such is not the case. For Bultmann the issue of existentialism and soteriology comes to expression in the question of "self-understanding." What the gospel offers is a new possibility for understanding oneself as deriving life not from one's own resources or those of the world, but rather from the Word of grace. But the emphasis is still heavily on 'understanding' with the confidence that new self-understanding settles the issue of authentic life. It occurs to me that such categories lend themselves quite readily to a consistent and limited appeal to the intellect, and again one can suspect that at least one basic factor in this resides in the concentration on 'revelation'. 'Revelation' gives to man knowledge, in this case self-knowledge.

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[526] Ibid., p. 116.

[527] Ibid., p. 124.

[528] Ibid., p. 133.

In Bultmann the question of epistemology is cast in existentialist terms, but it remains that the question of knowledge and understanding is paramount.

Because of the prevailing noetic cast of theology and preaching stemming from the concentration on 'revelation' in Barth and Bultmann there is reason to question the adequacy of the concentration on 'revelation' as a vehicle to give expression to the full dimensions of both the gospel and man's response to the gospel. Certainly attention must be given to the question of epistemology, but it occurs that focus on this question involves basic limitations.

One further problem with the concentration on 'revelation' must be mentioned. It can be argued that the particular brands of revelational theology espoused in Barth and Bultmann establish 'revelation' as a controlling principle in exegesis of Biblical texts. The chosen definition utilized in the concept of revelation by each of the two materially effects what the texts of the Bible are allowed to say. Attention to this tendency is noted in various critics and must be underlined here inasmuch as definite implications for preaching are involved.

Barth, of course, seeks to make a case for the freedom of the witness of Scripture to speak its own word unfettered by presuppositions which control exegesis. He is especially critical of Bultmann where it occurs that Bultmann allows existentialist presuppositions to limit what the text of Scripture has to say. This is not to imply that Barth supposes that we can interpret Scripture without recourse to presuppositions. Quite to the contrary he insists that the interpreter always works within some scheme of thought, acknowledging that no interpreter is merely observer and exponent of what is in the text. He writes, "Everyone has some sort of philosophy, i.e., a personal view of the fundamental nature and relationship of things . . ."[529] He argues that one must have a basic awareness of what scheme of thought he is employing in coming to Scripture. But, Barth insists, any such system must be held only as hypothesis, must have no independent interest in itself, and must always be ready to be corrected by what is found in the text.[530] The peril in the use of presuppositions in coming to Scripture rests in the situation where one puts the presupposition in an unchallenged controlling position. Barth says that a philosophical presupposition is dangerous

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[529] C.D. I 2, p. 728.

[530] C.D. I 2, p. 730 ff.

> . . . when in using it we cease to be aware of its difference from the biblical way of thought and its original unfitness for the apprehension and interpretation of the latter. . . . It becomes dangerous, therefore, when . . . we posit it absolutely over against Scripture, expecting that by placing it, as it were, on the same high level as Scripture, we can use it to control Scripture.[531]

Such advice is quite to the point.

But the question is whether Barth has not allowed the presupposition that the texts of Scripture wish to speak in the category of revelation to become just such a controlling principle. In discussing the revealed Word of God in Volume I of the Church Dogmatics Barth writes,

> The fulness of time, which is identical with Jesus Christ, this pure event in relation to which everything else is not, yet an event or has ceased to be one, this "it is finished!" this Deus dixit, to which there are no analogies, is the revelation attested in the Bible. To understand the Bible would mean, from beginning to end and from verse to verse to understand how everything in it is related to that as to its invisible-visible center. . . . The unity of revelation guarantees the unity of the Biblical witness, in spite of and within its utter multiplicity, in fact contradictoriness.[532]

It would appear that the one unchallengeable presupposition, the one hypothesis that is so self-evident that it goes unquestioned, is the fact that the Bible attests the self-revelation of God. From that center the manifest disunity of the Bible becomes a unity. The concept of revelation becomes an unchallenged presupposition of Biblical exegesis.

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[531] C.D. I 2, p. 732.

[532] C.D. I 1, p. 131.

In light of previous discussion, however, the question persists, "Is it so self-evident that the entire Biblical witness seeks to express itself as revelation?" Does the Christocentric principle of Barth's theology really do justice to all the texts of the Bible? Various critics have challenged Barth at just this point. John Cobb, for one, contends that "The major presupposition that must be pointed out, then, is the assumption of the unity of Scripture."[533] He argues that Barth's whole system rests on the accuracy of his understanding of the way in which God is present to the world, namely through the sole revelation in Jesus Christ. Cobb concludes with the judgement that despite his dislike of controlling principles, Barth has indeed set his particular idea of revelation as a controlling principle. He writes,

> The issue is, then, whether Scripture that is understood as testimony to revelation demands that exclusive status which Barth accords it, or whether this exclusive status is ascribed it on considerations that are alien to Scripture itself. It is my belief that the latter is the case.[534]

James Barr also gives attention to the fact that in Barth the basic presupposition of 'revelation' exercises a controlling influence on texts as to what they may or may not say. Barr acknowledges that one may argue for some moderation of such a controlling influence in latter volumes of the Church Dogmatics, but recognizes that in the Prolegomena the general connections of theology and exegesis are established and that these early presuppositions affect exegesis materially throughout.[535]

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[533] John B. Cobb, Jr., Living Options in Protestant Theology, op. cit., p. 193.

[534] Ibid., p. 196.

One fairly obvious example of difficulty with the Christocentric character of Barth's concentration on revelation concerns interpretation of the Old Testament. Barr, an Old Testament scholar, writes in this vein,

> Since the idea of revelation seems naturally to take the form of self-revelation of God, this leads to the conception of Christ as being that which is revealed. In this sense it is natural for revelational models to be Christocentric. But this has been a ceaseless source of embarrassment for the Christian interpreter of the Old Testament.[536]

It is significant that in an era when theology has been dominated by concentration on 'revelation' the Old Testament is often viewed as "a problem." Barth, of course, does not see the Old Testament as a problem inasmuch as he interprets Old Testament texts in a Christocentric manner. He shows a definite liking for Old Testament texts in the two most recent volumes of published sermons. Seven of the sixteen sermons in Deliverance to the Captives and six of the twelve sermons in Call for God are from Old Testament texts. The interesting thing to note is the way in which Barth's interpretation of these texts assumes such a manifest

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[535] Barr, op. cit., p. 90-91

[536] Ibid., p. 99.

Christocentric character. As indicated earlier, the sermon on Psalm 34:5, "Look up to him, your face will shine, and you shall never be ashamed" simply moves immediately into a prevailing Christocentric line. The first sentences read,

> My dear brothers and sisters, 'Look up to him!' This is what we commemorate on Ascension Day: the urgent invitation, the permission and the command, the freedom we enjoy as Christians and the obedience that is expected from us to look up to him, to Jesus Christ. . . .[537]

And so runs the sermon. The jump from the Psalmist's word to Jesus Christ is not argued, the presuppositions for such a jump are not discussed. The dogmatic conclusions are simply presupposed and the Old Testament text is cast in a Christocentric mold. In another sermon the text is Isaiah 54:7-8 and the opening sentences move immediately into discussion of Easter.[538] Such may be expected from Barth's presupposition of 'revelation' in Jesus Christ and the unity of the Bible as testimony to that event of revelation. But it remains that one must import significant presuppositions to make such a jump from Old Testament to Jesus Christ. And the question that persists is whether or not Barth is ready to question such a presupposition. Is it not the case that the controlling principle of 'revelation' as defined by Barth significantly affects exegesis at this point? And further does not such a Christocentric interpretation of Old Testament texts raise material questions about the legitimacy of the presuppositions involved?

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[537] Barth, Deliverance to the Captives, op. cit., p. 44.

[538] Karl Barth, Call for God (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 50.

The situation with Bultmann is not structurally so different. In his decision to define 'revelation' as an occurrence which puts the hearer in a new situation he has cast the die for existentialist interpretation. The presupposition involved is that 'revelation' must speak in terms of self-understanding, and exegesis is controlled by that principle. Of course, Bultmann does not seek to hide his presuppositions. He acknowledges his dependence on Heidegger, and as indicated, sees such dependence not as importation of a philosophy foreign to the concepts of the New Testament, but rather one that is quite compatible. But is it not the case that here again we have a theology which attempts to be a theology of 'revelation', specifically defined, allowing the definition of 'revelation' to become a controlling principle of exegesis? One need not document the manifest existentialist cast of Bultmann's exegesis. It is self-evident. Texts can speak only of man's existence, and where there are elements that appear to do otherwise they are labeled myth and demythologized to fit existentialist categories. Hermann Diem contends, "It cannot be denied that this exegesis of Bultmann's conceals a particular systematic conception."[539] And that judgement receives widespread agreement. Barth says, quite rightly I believe, the following concerning Bultmann's controlling dogmatic principles:

> Bultmann is an exegete. But it is impossible to engage him in exegetical discussion. For he is also a systematic theologian of the type which handles texts in such a way that

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[539] Diem, op. cit., p. 250.

> their exegesis is always controlled by a set of dogmatic presuppositions and is thus wholly dependent upon their validity.[540]

It is my argument that a significant factor in Bultmann's imposition of controlling principles in exegesis stems not simply from his affinity for existentialist categories, but equally as much from his attempt to move from the presupposition of 'revelation'. As indicated earlier, basic to the use of 'revelation' as a central focus in theology is the necessity of defining what concept of 'revelation' is being utilized. This is the case not simply for Bultmann, but for the various contemporary strains of 'revelational theology'. Could it be that recourse to a theology based on the concept of 'revelation' invites importation of controlling principles in exegesis depending on how one defines his concept of 'revelation'?

It is interesting to recall that Bultmann does not really argue the case for the use of existentialist categories. He assumes that Heidegger's categories are compatible with the New Testament scheme of things, but he does not really argue the case. But as James Barr suggests, "It is historically a very challengeable position to maintain that a modern philosophy like Heidegger's fundamentally represents the New Testament position."[541] As indicated in the discussion of Bultmann nowhere does he really argue the case for the turn to existentialism. In the important essays on demythologizing[542] and hermeneutics[543] he simply assumes the adequacy of existentialist categories. Perhaps it is the case that the basic decisions for existentialism are reflected in two earlier essays which discuss the concept of 'revelation'. His 1917 essay, "Concerning the Hidden and Revealed God"[544] argues the case that we can know nothing of God *pro se* but can only speak of man's experience of life before God the Creator. God is totally other. The principle of the distinction between God and man becomes an absolute principle and we cannot speak of God in Himself. And the 1929 essay on "The Concept of Revelation in the New Testament"[545] as indicated, opts for a definition of 'revelation' that prejudices the discussion of 'revelation' in terms of existentialism. In both cases one can argue that the particular *concept* of revelation is the locus for importation of basic presuppositions that exercise controlling influence in exegesis. In quite definite ways the choice of existentialist categories is integrally involved in how one chooses to define the ambiguous term 'revelation', and that materially affects subsequent exegesis.

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[540] C.D. III 2, p. 445. (It will be noted that from the argument presented above I would be tempted to paraphrase these words and apply them to Barth in his exegesis.)

[541] Barr, op. cit., p. 175.

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[542] Bartsch, *Kerygma and Myth*, *op. cit.*, p. 1 ff, "New Testament and Mythology."

[543] Bultmann, *Essays*, *op. cit.*, "The Problem of Hermeneutics," p. 234 ff.

[544] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, *op. cit.*, p. 23 ff.

[545] *Ibid.*, p. 58. ff

These then are the four major criticisms of the concentration on revelation in Barth and Bultmann: (1) It is questionable that 'revelation' as used is derived from Biblical exegesis. (2) The term 'revelation' is confusing inasmuch as there is no commonly agreed upon frame of reference for use of the term and theologians of radically different persuasions can import their particular concept of 'revelation' quite easily. Thus you have many theologians working from the center of 'revelation', but the substance of the theologies is confusingly contradictory. (3) The concentration on 'revelation' is primarily oriented to the question of epistemology, and involves decisive limitations. (4) The particular concept of 'revelation' chosen by the theologian asserts an undue controlling influence in exegesis.

My concern now is to turn to the implications of the above criticisms as they affect the concept of preaching which accompanies the concentration on 'revelation'. Previous study has shown that in the case of both Barth and Bultmann preaching is correlate of 'revelation'. Barth's closely defined three-fold form of the Word of God integrally links 'revelation' with preaching and preaching with 'revelation'. Bultmann's insistence that 'revelation' is always in the present turns to present 'kerygma' as the event of 'revelation'. But, if we call into question the concentration on 'revelation', are we not involved in significant questions about the definition of preaching involved in Barth and Bultmann? It would seem that at least the following issues are pertinent to the understanding of preaching forwarded by the two men.

First, just as questions were raised about the Biblical basis for the concept of 'revelation', so too can quite pointed questions be raised about the Biblical basis for the definition of preaching in the two men.

We have already noted that in the Prolegomena to the Church Dogmatics where Barth formulates his concept of the three-fold form of the Word of God there is no consistent effort to base the understanding of preaching forwarded there on exegetical conclusions. The basic appeal for justification of the Word of God as preached is to the Reformers.[546] Lofty affirmations are made for preaching, but the relation of these affirmations to the understanding of preaching in the New Testament is at best casual. The Word of God, distinctly defined in terms of 'revelation', is the ". . . presupposition which makes proclamation to be proclamation".[547] And the definition of preaching which results bears the definite marks of the particular concentration on 'revelation' that characterizes Volume I of the Church Dogmatics. This serves to raise significant questions about recourse to the structures of the three-fold form of the Word of God as a working theology of preaching today. It should not be concluded from these remarks that there is no reason to view preaching as a present form of the Word of God, nor is to be assumed that there is not some Biblical basis for understanding preaching as Word of God. It is, however, germane to raise the question as to whether

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[546] Cf. C.D. I 1, p. 98 ff., cf. supra, p. 38 ff.

[547] Ibid., p. 98.

Barth's particular concept of the three-fold form of the Word and his linking of preaching to 'revelation' as Word of God is useful in defining the specific task of preaching today. It would appear that the affirmations made for preaching in this context move rapidly into the realm of convenient theological category as partner to the concentration on 'revelation' and stand in need of correction from more considered exegetical study.

It is the case that Barth himself provides fundamental cues for such a shift away from concentration on the three-fold form of the Word of God as the basic framework for understanding preaching. While one can search in vain for exegetical grounds for the definition of preaching in Volume I 1, it occurs that there is a significant attempt to undergird the understanding of preaching with exegesis in Volume IV 2 of the Church Dogmatics.[548] In this context, while conversation of the Word is not abandoned, the concept of preaching is defined more concertedly in terms of 'witness' to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is true that the discussion of the Word of God as preached in Volume I of the Church Dogmatics makes clear that preaching is witness to revelation. But in IV 2 the complexion of the event of preaching is not so heavily on preaching as witness to revelation in the limited context of epistemological concerns, and therefore the threefold form of the Word of God, but rather the emphasis focuses more on the wider significance of the event of Jesus Christ. In concluding the investigation of various Biblical words used to describe the activity of preaching, and in the insistence that the Bible does not allow for viewing preaching as a ". . . self-sufficient and self-operative hypothesis which is as such the proton and the eschaton."[549] (An argument aimed against Bultmann's efforts to identify the eschatological event of Christ with the even of present preaching) Barth insists, "Christian preaching is the Word of the cross (I Cor. 1:18), the Word of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19). As such it points beyond itself to the concrete history of Jesus Christ. To use the Johannine term, it is witness to Him."[550] He goes on to add that preaching ". . . is the proclamation of Jesus as Lord, the giving of factual information and the summons to an appropriate attitude of repentance and faith."[551] In other words, here in the context of more considered exegesis, Barth does not abandon reference to preaching as Word, but he does define preaching on exegetical grounds not in terms of three-fold form of the Word but more pointedly in terms of 'witness'. Previous discussion has highlighted this facet of Barth's concept of preaching. It is the argument here that recourse to Barth's discussion of preaching in this vein is more fruitful than concentration on the ideas forwarded in the Prolegemona. One reason for such, at least, is that in IV 2 of the _Church Dogmatics_ the claims for preaching are derived more substantively from exegetical discussion.

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[548] C.D. IV 2, p. 195 ff.

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[549] C.D. IV 2, p. 208

[550] C.D. IV 2, p. 208.

[551] C.D. IV 2, pp. 208-209.

The primary matter at hand, however, is simply that the claims for preaching in the structures of the three-fold form of the Word of God in Volume I of the Church Dogmatics suffer from the same deficiencies indicated in the discussion of revelation--the problematic of the Biblical grounds for the formulations forwarded.

The same charge can be made against Bultmann. It is quite true that it was the result of his historical-critical study of the New Testament that played a decisive part in his concentration on preaching. From that study he concluded that in the New Testament we do not have recourse to historical accounts, but rather to 'kerygma', the preaching of the early Christian community. As indicated, his historical scepticism was converted into a positive factor in that he proceeded to declare the concern for the history behind the preaching as illegitimate and concentrated on the necessity of present preaching as revelation. In this he argues that he is carrying the idea of justification by faith to its logical conclusions in the realm of epistemology--all we have to go on is the word of preaching. Neither historical research nor dogmatic formulations can make faith secure, nor should they. Contemporary man is simply confronted with the word of Jesus Christ as Lord and is asked if he believes this. Bultmann sees such a line of development as consistent with his exegetical conclusions.

However, the thing to be argued is that there is serious reason to question whether Bultmann has sought to understand the event of preaching from the groundwork of exegetical exploration into the New Testament idea of preaching. One can argue, as we have sought to do, that Bultmann's emphasis on preaching is the product of the combination of his historical scepticism, his radicalizing of the question of justification in existentialist terms, and his basic presuppositions concerning the concept of 'revelation'. Nowhere is the lack of careful exegetical groundwork for the understanding of preaching more apparent than in his use of the word 'kerygma'. That this is one of the key words in Bultmann's writing is self-evident. On the surface, it has a distinctly Biblical ring. But question remains as to whether Bultmann employs the word in the way the New Testament uses it. We have previously referred to the confusion concerning 'kerygma' present in contemporary theology.[552] We have shown that Bultmann's use of the word 'kerygma' carries with it the basic understanding that 'kerygma' is personal address demanding decision. But it does not take a sophisticated New Testament scholar to discern that the word 'kerygma' in the New Testament is by no means limited to such a use, and further, simple reference to a concordance will reveal that the noun 'kerygma' is used quite infrequently, while the verb 'kerossein' is the primary form of the word occurring in the New Testament. Bultmann, however, uses 'kerygma' primarily as a noun. It would seem to be the case that Bultmann has taken a particular word from the New Testament vocabulary, one that has indeed gained significant sophistication in contemporary theology, and proceeded to import his peculiar existentialist definition for use of the word in his theology. Just as serious question was raised about the exegetical grounds for his concept of 'revelation' so too must we raise the question of the exegetical grounds for the understanding of 'kerygma' so pervasively employed in Bultmann's theology.

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[552] _Supra_, p. 220 ff.

It can further be questioned whether there is adequate exegetical ground for Bultmann's insistence that the significance of the event of Jesus Christ is not to be located in the past, but solely in present preaching as the eschatological event. Bultmann's denigration of history is well known. Indeed, it has been the case that much of the debate about Bultmann's theology revolves around the alleged threat of 'dehistorizing' the gospel.[553] Even Bultmann's students see the peril of locating everything in the present event of preaching and seek to correct what they see as a weakness in the "new quest of the historical Jesus."[554] The significant thing to be marked in this context is that the claim for preaching as 'eschatological event', as defined by Bultmann, is open to quite serious questions on exegetical grounds.

The primary concern in the preceding remarks is simply that the understanding of preaching which goes hand in hand with the emphasis on preaching as correlate of 'revelation' suffers from the same weakness marked in the critique of the concentration on 'revelation'--the deficiency of adequate exegetical basis for the working definitions employed.

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[553] Cf. Braaten and Harrisville, Kerygma and History and The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ, op. cit., typical discussion of the question of Bultmann's tendency to dehistorize the kerygma.

[554] Cf. Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, op. cit., Robinson, The New Question of the Historical Jesus, op. cit., and Ebeling, Theology and Proclamation, op. cit., for typical discussion with Bultmann on this question from the stance of those in sympathy with Bultmann.

Even though hallowed words--Word of God, proclamation, revelation, kerygma, eschatological event--are employed in the discussion of preaching in Barth and Bultmann, serious question remains as to the adequacy of the exegesis of Biblical material to substantiate the way in which these words are used.

The second uneasiness with the definitions of preaching employed in Barth and Bultmann rests in the fact that, consistent with the concentration on 'revelation', the concerns of preaching are oriented toward the basic epistemological concerns that come to expression in the focus on 'revelation'. Again, no attempt is made here to depreciate the importance of the question of epistemology. My concern, however, is that the focus on this question becomes unduly pervasive in Barth's earlier definition of preaching and in Bultmann's consistent emphasis on "understanding."

With the concentration on 'revelation' manifest in Barth and Bultmann the function of preaching is defined as the vehicle for making the _illic_ _et_ _tunc_ of the event of revelation in Jesus _hic_ _et_ _nunc_.[555] The focus on the question of the "historical gap" occupies center stage with the result that it is in preaching that the gap is overcome. The 'revelation' in Jesus Christ is present in the event of proclamation, in Barth's case, and in Bultmann's present 'kerygma', moving from the bare "that" of Jesus, becomes the locus of 'revelation' in the present. And manifestly the same epistemological concerns that occupy the emphasis on 'revelation' are transferred into the understanding of preaching. Preaching thus assumes a strongly neotic function, 'telling' what we can 'know' in Barth,[556] and "self-understanding" in Bultmann.[557] Indeed, it is indicative that Bultmann places such heavy emphasis on "understanding" throughout his program of theologizing. Certainly, one would not argue for a sacrificium intellectus, and recognition must be given to the legitimate facets of Bultmann's quest for understanding. But it may well be suspected that the basic framework of epistemology which gives rise to the emphasis on 'revelation' has unduly affected his program. The prevailing concerns in preaching pivot on "self-understanding" and hermeneutics as the process of understanding. Barth underscores this facet of Bultmann's focus when he writes, "The name of Rudolf Bultmann is inseparably linked with the idea of 'understanding'."[558] And in his attempt to "understand Bultmann" he makes a deliberate play on Bultmann's concern for understanding and the consequent difficulty in understanding Bultmann. Our interest here is not so much Barth's critique of Bultmann, but rather the acknowledgement that the issue of "understanding" pervades Bultmann's writing, and quite pointedly his concerns in preaching. One wonders if the prevailing concentration on 'understanding' is not the result of the focus on 'revelation' and its primary epistemological bias. At least, there is reason to assert that the existentialist theology of Bultmann does give to theology, and the concept of preaching involved, a heavy noetic cast. Dietrich Ritschl calls attention to this tendency in the following words:

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[555] Cf. C. D. I 1, p. 170.

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[556] Cf. supra, p. 269.

[557] Supra, p. 228 ff.

[558] Bartsch, Kerygma and Myth, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 83.

> . . . apparent intellectualism is rooted in the idealistic origins of this theology (existentialist theology): Jesus, in the era after his death, reaches the thoughts of the believers. Their thoughts, shaped and liberated by justifying faith, can now face world-reality; but world reality itself no longer speaks the language of Jesus; he is essentially a foreigner to reality.[559]

The combination of the existentialist emphasis on "self-understanding" and the consuming interest in hermeneutics serve to give Bultmann's idea of preaching an undue noetic character.

It can be argued further that the epistemological bias of the concentration on 'revelation' fosters preaching that heralds the alleged 'God of the gaps.' On this score it is necessary first of all to prove to man his lack of knowledge or inauthenticity. It must be admitted that Barth's particular construction of things is not so much suited to the 'God of the gaps' approach as is Bultmann's. Bultmann uses existentialist analysis to document the inauthenticity of man's existence, and then uses this as basis for preaching to him. On this score the starting point of theology and preaching is 'sin', and the analysis of inauthentic existence serves the purpose of the 'law', accusing man of sin. 'Kerygma' then offers to man authentic existence through new self-understanding. For all the concern of Bultmann for a realistic assessment of modern man, it occurs that this scheme of things is manifestly a one-sided approach to man. In one sense, Bultmann can be charged with establishing man's lack of self-understanding as the raison dètre of preaching.

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[559] Dietrich Ritschl, Memory and Hope (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 47.

With Barth, one can argue that a basic perspective on man is his lack of knowledge of God and his inability to attain such knowledge apart from the 'revelation' in Jesus Christ. This would mean that fundamental to the doctrine of man is a definition of man in terms of the deficiency of knowledge, again reflecting the results of the epistemological bias of the concentration on 'revelation', and casting preaching in the mold of supplying information.

Basic to the uneasiness with both Barth and Bultmann at this point is the question of the adequacy of the definition of doctrine of man in terms of the lack of 'understanding' and 'knowledge'. Certainly the question of man's knowing is integral to such a doctrine, but is there not the danger that the concentration on 'revelation' results in preaching that sees man's lack of knowledge in distorted proportions?

Still again it can be argued that the epistemological bias in the concentration on 'revelation' presents difficulties in preaching when it comes to the understanding of the historical events that give rise to the preaching of the gospel. Reference has previously been made to the difficulties with history present in both Barth and Bultmann. The Urgeschichte emphasis of the earlier Barth and the historical scepticism of Bultmann serve to point up the difficulty with history present in the two men. Carl Braaten alleges that Pannenberg sees the different theologies of Barth and Bultmann essentially as one in their treatment of history at the point where both appear to conclude that critical-historical investigation as the scientific verification of events did not seem to leave room for redemptive events. And Braaten goes on to allege that the underlying kinship of the two men is further seen in the fact that their students have sought to bury their differences in face of the threat of a theology like Pannenberg's with its significantly different assessment of history.[560] While the discussion of the treatment of history in Barth and Bultmann is far more complex than we are able to explore here, it is germane to raise the question as to whether the placing of the epistemological concerns at the forefront of theology with the resulting concentration on 'revelation' may not be a basic ingredient in the denigration of history in the two men. (It must be added that in latter volumes of the Church Dogmatics Barth has moved from the categories of Urgeschichte to a more realistic assessment of historical events.) Our concern, however, is to mark the fact that the effects of the denigration of history present difficulties for the idea of preaching and preaching itself. One of the curious facts of Barth's preaching is that he chooses not to preach from narrative accounts in the gospels. In the two most recent volumes of sermons the texts from the gospels are taken from either birth stories or passion accounts. The narrative pericopes having to do with Jesus' ministry in Galilee are neglected. Now it would be foolish to make too much of this, but it is indicative that there seems to be a definite liking for texts which have to do with either birth and passion accounts, or short texts from the Old Testament, especially the Psalms, and the epistles which are manifestly more abstract and lend themselves to drawing dogmatic conclusions. Could this reflect something of the embarrassment with history present in Barth's idea of preaching? Could it be that this is reflection of the basic epistemological-noetic bias we have discussed previously? In Bultmann's case we face the reduction of history to existentialist history and the legitimate questions concerning the historical basis of the events proclaimed are replaced by prevailing individualistic categories of self-understanding.

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[560] Braaten, History and Hermeneutics, op. cit., p. 28.

My argument is that the concentration on 'revelation' in the two men presents manifest difficulties in the understanding of history and this has important consequences for the man who stands in the pulpit, both in how he conceives his task there and in what he says.

The third basic criticism of the concept of preaching which accompanies the concentration on 'revelation' has to do with the elaborate claims made for preaching. Perhaps the way to put it is to say that the alleged "inflation of the concept of revelation"[561] carries with it an inflation of the concept of preaching. My argument is simply that in the earlier formulations of Barth's three-fold form of the Word of God and in Bultmann's focus on 'kerygma' and preaching as eschatological event too much is claimed for preaching. The concentration on preaching appears to involve an implied denigration of other facets of the church's life and the entire doctrine of the church is cast too much in terms of the preaching function of the church.

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[561] *Ibid.*, p. 12. The phrase is used by Braaten who calls attention to the fact that Paul Althaus stated the case in these terms in a 1941 essay.

It has been noted that Barth began his dogmatic endeavors with a pointed interest in seeking to formulate dogmatics from the specific perspective of preaching.[562] The event of Church proclamation was to be the starting point, and in the early Christian Dogmatics he sought to move from an existential-phenomenological examination of elements involved in the preaching event. Though he moderated the basis of such a beginning in the first volume of the Church Dogmatics it is quite apparent that here too the fundamental question revolves around the fact that in the Church there is talk of God, namely Church proclamation. And as noted, the basic epistemological presuppositions proposed are cast in terms of the three-fold form of the Word of God, preached, written, revealed. This scheme of things involved two basic factors as I see it. One, the Church was defined primarily in terms of its function of proclamation defined as preaching and sacrament. And secondly, as consequence of this, other facets of the church's life were neglected or obscured. Dogmatics proceeded on the basis of the preaching of the church. Everything revolves around preaching. From that center the elaborate claims for preaching are made as correlate of 'revelation', the present form of the Word of God.

It must, of course, be recognized that in the early part of the twentieth century such a development in dogmatics was quite possibly needed. We have sought to indicate how, in reflection on various developments in the prevailing theology of the time, Barth sought to begin new dogmatic endeavors from the specific perspective of preaching. The line from Reformation to Protestant orthodoxy to Neo-Protestantism had led to manifest problems in the conception and practices of preaching. Barth's corrective was for many a needed and healthy corrective. But with such an exaggerated focus on preaching one gets the uneasy feeling that indeed too much is being claimed for preaching. The perspective is perhaps unduly limited. Proclamation must surely be seen as integral to the church's life, but must everything be focused here? It can be argued that here again Barth is simply reflecting the basic definition of the church that flows from the Reformation with its concept of the church focusing on "the Word rightly preached and heard and the sacraments administered and received." But in so defining the Church, and in Barth's earlier writing seeing this definition worked out with logical consistency, there arise questions as to the adequacy of such a definition. When cast as Barth casts it, it is not the case that indeed too much is claimed for preaching, and too little for other facets of the church's life?

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[562] Supra, p. 30 ff.

At this point it is germane to recall that there is an apparent moderation of the extreme focus on preaching in the later volumes of the Church Dogmatics. When we come to Volume IV 3 the vocation of the Christian and of the Christian community is defined in terms of 'witness', and there is a consequent more positive evaluation of other facets of the church's life in the vocation of witness. Preaching is seen to be one form of the church's multiform witness. As noted, it is a "basic form"[563] of the church's ministry of witness, but it is only one form of that ministry. There is no need to argue for some revolutionary shift in Barth's theology, but it should be marked that there is definitely a shift! Preaching as witness to 'revelation' is integral to the discussion of proclamation in the first volume of the Church Dogmatics. One can discern that the emphasis on witness is present from the first. The significant shift, however, is found in the fact that while in the first volume of the Church Dogmatics the present form of witness to 'revelation' was limited to proclamation, defined as preaching and sacrament, the discussion in IV 3 includes other facets of the church's life, i.e., praise, instruction, evangelism, mission, theology, prayer, the cure of souls, personal example and action, diaconate, prophetic action, and fellowship, as basic forms of the church's ministry of witness. Further, as we have marked, in this context the description of preaching is not in terms of three-fold form of the Word of God as found in the Prolegomena, but partakes of a much more realistic assessment of the concrete event of preaching as witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ on the basis of the Biblical writings. On Barth's own score it can be argued that the 'inflation of the concept of preaching' in Volume I 1 is moderated in the discussion of the witness ministry of the church in Volume IV 3. Barth himself seems to give the cue for reconsideration of the elaborate claims made in Volume I.

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[563] C.D. IV 3, p. 870.

The case with Bultmann reflects on the one hand a massive inflation of the concept of preaching, and on the other hand, no significant re-assessment of the claims made for preaching. From beginning to end the concentration on preaching is cast in the form of lofty affirmations about 'kerygma'. As discussed, the combination of historical scepticism and existentialist presuppositions which define 'revelation' solely as present event lead to the definition of preaching as 'eschatological event'. The reality of the event of Jesus Christ rests on the event of present preaching. The salvation present in Jesus Christ involves the preaching of that event and salvation is not what it is without preaching. Concern for the history behind preaching is abandoned and everything rests on the shoulders of the present moment of preaching. The church is seen primarily as the platform for preaching and the individual appropriation of salvation offered in preaching. The consuming concern of Bultmann's theology centers on the event of preaching. Existentialist interpretation of scripture, demythologizing, and hermeneutics all have an eye focused on confronting modern man with the word of the gospel in preaching. Only scant attention is given to other facets of the church's life. Everything hinges on preaching defined as eschatological event, 'kerygma', occasion for self-understanding, and Word of God. It is my argument that this is a manifestly one-sided view of the church. Further it is highly questionable that the event of preaching can carry the weight of eschatological event which Bultmann wishes to ascribe to it. The preaching which involves such a denigration of history as found in Bultmann smacks of a neat theological abstraction which needs correction from the standpoint of both historical concerns and the realities of the situation of the church, a point to which we shall give later attention. It would appear that the inflation of the concept of 'revelation', existentially defined, involves an unwarranted inflation of the concept of preaching. The one-sidedness of Bultmann's focus on preaching may well make pertinent affirmation about preaching, but it is found wanting precisely because it is so one-sided and seeks to resolve knotty problems of theology, history, and Biblical interpretation by recourse to a particular and limited concept of 'kerygma'.

At this point a footnote on the disillusionment with preaching in the American situation may be inserted. It may well be the fact that the elaborate and one-sided claims made for preaching in the earlier Barth and throughout Bultmann are an important factor in the disillusionment with preaching today. The claims for preaching are so one-sided, the inflation of preaching is so elaborate, and the neglect of other facets of the church's life so manifest that the working pastor caught up in the full round of the church's life looks with suspicion on preaching. The early Barth and Bultmann consistently appear to define everything in terms of preaching. The pastor knows that on the one hand there is far more to the life the church's witness and on the other hand finds it hard to square what happens in preaching with the lofty claims made for preaching. The result is often a frustration and despair of preaching. When such elaborate claims made for preaching from the theological perspectives do not appear to partake of the reality known by the pastor in his concrete life then there is the temptation to jettison the theological claims and likewise seriously question the function of preaching altogether.

Just as we had occasion to raise questions about the concentration on 'revelation' in contemporary theology, we have also been led to raise questions about the conception of preaching that accompanies the concentration on 'revelation'. The major questions posed have asked (1) whether there is Biblical basis for the conception of preaching adopted in the early Barth and in Bultmann throughout; (2) whether the basic epistemological context of the concentration on 'revelation' does not lead to a conception of preaching that is unduly noetic; (3) whether the 'inflation of the concept of revelation' does not also involve an 'inflation of the concept of preaching' to the neglect of other facets of the church's life. On the score of both the questions about revelation and the resulting questions about the concept of preaching there is reason to question the adequacy of the conception of preaching found in Barth, specifically the early Barth, and Bultmann.

Major attention has been given to the critique of the concentration on 'revelation' and the consequent concentration on preaching inasmuch as it is my judgement that the approach to preaching in the two men is fundamentally controlled by the approach to 'revelation'. Preaching as correlate of 'revelation' is at the heart of the system of both men and the divergencies enter where particular concepts of 'revelation' are adopted. But there are other areas of important questions; and to these we now proceed, though of necessity the discussion will be briefer.

2. The second area of concern in response to Barth and Bultmann in their focus on preaching has to do with the remoteness and abstraction involved in much of the discussion of preaching. Certainly

it is to be acknowledged that there must of necessity be a significant degree of abstraction in theological treatises. But I see it as the function of the practical theologian to seek to examine the abstractions of the dogmatic and Biblical theologian in light of the concrete life of the church and the individual pastors involved in the immediate task of week by week preaching. I do not intend to introduce insipient anti-intellectualism at this point, nor to impose unwarranted pragmatic standards on the work of the dogmatic and Biblical theologian. But, if as claimed, the interest of both Barth and Bultmann is pointedly focused on the church's preaching then it becomes necessary to respond to them from that perspective. And from that perspective one gains a recurring suspicion that the discussion of preaching has been transferred from immediate contact with actual preaching to more remote arenas of neat theological categories.

In Barth's case we have marked the fact that his pivotal interest in preaching arose, at least in part, from his existential involvement with the task of preaching week by week in a small Swiss village. His early essays, especially "The Need and Promise of Christian Preaching"[564] reflect a definite sympathy for and understanding of the situation of the man facing the awesome moment of the sermon in the context of corporate worship. To a certain degree, through his occasional preaching in the jail in Basel and his close contact with parish ministers, that perspective prevails in Barth's writings. But there is reason for concern when one reads the formulations in the Prolegomena. The mood has changed and consideration of Church proclamation assumes a quite formal and remote character. And the tighter Barth weaves the logic of the three-fold form of the Word of God the more remote the discussion sounds. Indeed, it appears that Church proclamation has become a convenient theological category so highly abstracted from the concrete event of the sermon that it is hard to relate the two. The formulations may be epistemologically pat, but one longs for the more realistic note sounded in the early essays. Church proclamation has become a highly formal category and the elaborate affirmations about the three-fold form of the Word of God are far removed from the note of immediate involvement sounded in "The Need and Promise of Christian Preaching." There Barth wrote,

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[564] Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, op. cit., p. 97.

> . . . it simply came about that the familiar situation of the minister on Saturday at his desk and on Sunday in the pulpit crystalized in my case into a marginal note on all theology. . .[565]

In this context Barth reflects existential involvement with the task of the preacher. In the earliest stages Barth sees the danger that may well evolve if his concerns develop into a full-blown new theology. He writes,

> Do not think that I make my contribution to theological discussion today or any day, in rivalry with the fundamentalist, liberal, Ritschlian, or history-of-religion type theology. Take it rather as a kind of marginal note, a gloss which in its way agrees with all these types--and which, I am convinced, loses its meaning the moment it becomes more than a note and takes up space as a new theology next to the others.[566]

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[565] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

[566] *Ibid.*, p. 98.

One senses something prophetic in these words. Certainly my argument is not that Barth should never have undertaken the writing of a Church Dogmatics. But it is the case that some of the remoteness of a system or 'school' feared in Barth's early remarks comes to pass in his undertaking the task of dogmatic writing. In fairness to him it must be acknowledged that he seeks to work from the "standpoint" of the man in the pulpit, but in the systematic development of the discussion of preaching the imminent existential note of his earliest essays is lost, and perhaps also some of the "meaning." The formal definitions forwarded in the development of the three-fold form of the Word of God tend to become quite remote. The structure is tight, the claims lofty, and the discussion abstract. And it is my suspicion that the uneasiness felt by the practical theologian may reside in the fact that while the discussion includes matters of practical concern, namely church proclamation, the real issue for Barth is establishing the basic presupposition of 'revelation' as distinctly defined. That, to be sure, is a necessary task for Barth, and I do not mean to fault him for the attempt. I do contend, however, that the formal discussion there poses problems for those involved in the immediate task of 'sitting at the desk on Saturday and standing in the pulpit on Sunday'. Some of those problems are treated in the preceding discussion of the concentration on 'revelation'.

It needs to be added that there is much in the Church Dogmatics that is of immense practical consequence. Especially does one discern the revival of the kind of concrete existential involvement of the early essays in the context of the discussion of the church's life in

Volume IV 3. There Barth has an eye to the basic presuppositions which underlie the present ongoing ministry of the church. The discussion is imminently practical and realistic. As mentioned, there preaching is seen as one form of the church's ministry, and there it is coupled with a helpful discussion of the other forms of the ministry of witness. It is my judgement that perhaps the best help for the preacher today comes not from the discussion of church proclamation in Volume I 1, but much more from the discussion of the total ministry of witness of the church in Volume IV 3 of the _Church Dogmatics_.

The study of Bultmann marked the fact that he has spent his entire career in the academic context. It was not so much the situation of 'the minister at his desk on Saturday and in the pulpit on Sunday' that shaped Bultmann's concerns in preaching as the influence of several major scholarly works.[567] For all the extensive interest in matters existential and pastoral Bultmann's theology has arisen primarily in an academic context. That is not necessarily to be considered a liability. But it remains that the practical theologian can discern several key areas where the interest in preaching is highly academic and abstract, and at least a few of these areas give rise to serious questions about Bultmann's usefulness in understanding and practicing the work of the parish ministry today.

One key cue to the remoteness of Bultmann's concerns is seen in the deficient doctrine of the church present in his writings. He acknowledges that he has not given attention to the doctrine of the church as a community of believers ordering their life together as a church. He writes, in response to one critic who marks Bultmann's neglect of ecclesiology,

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[567] _Supra_, p. 159 ff.

> Such reflection has not been my concern, and I concede to Bolewski that I have thought in a one-sided fashion--about the individual person and his relationship to the kerygma and not about the community. . . . I confess. . . . that ecclesiology has not stood in the midpoint of my work, and so I can only be grateful to be reminded of this lack in my work.[568]

Such a confession is of primary importance from the standpoint of practical theology. Preaching is an event in the life of the community of believers. Preaching occurs in the context of corporate worship. In thinking of "the individual and his relation to the kerygma" just what kind of preaching situation does Bultmann have in mind? Must one not suspect that a definition of preaching which seeks to consider the individual in isolation from other individuals bound together in the body of believers is a high form of abstraction? So abstract, in fact, as to raise serious questions about the usefulness of the concept of preaching that is addressed to individuals in isolation!

Further, one must raise questions about Bultmann's idea of what happens in preaching. On his score the occasion of preaching would appear to be pervasively concerned with what one might call "evangelistic preaching." The 'kerygma' is addressed to the one who hears anew the gospel.

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[568] Kegley, op. cit., pp. 277-278.

The focus of preaching is a decision about one's self-understanding. The occasion of preaching is aimed at continual reappropriation of the 'kerygma'. The demythologizing of the doctrine of the Spirit has led to a denuding of the idea of sanctification. Always the focus of preaching is aimed at new acceptance of the 'kerygma'. It may be quite true that on any given Sunday there are those who need just such a word, and indeed it is quite true that many nominal Christians may be more "outsiders" than "insiders" and need just such a confrontation. But to define preaching in such highly individualistic and evangelistic terms is to deliver us once again into the confining waters of pietism and revivalism. One can suspect that such an idea of preaching does not arise so much from concrete involvement in the ongoing life of the Christian community, but far more from the neat structure of existentialist theology, which for all its concern for the reality of modern man's situation comes across as quite unrealistic in its assessment of the modern Christian's situation.

Again, one can argue that Bultmann's concentraion on 'kerygma' is remote from the actual preaching of a sermon. 'Kerygma' becomes for Bultmann a convenient theological category for the present event of the existentialist idea of 'revelation'. But it is difficult to try to square 'kerygma' as eschatological event with the actual sermon preached in the context of the gathering for corporate worship of the community of believers. Certainly Bultmann has a valid point in insisting that preaching should have the character of personal address. Certainly he has a point in suggesting that the reality of the Christ event is present in the preaching of that event. But it is the case that in repeated contexts reference to 'kerygma' partakes more of a theological abstraction than it does of the concrete occasion of a sermon. When one turns to Bultmann's sermons from his discussion of preaching it is almost like moving in two worlds. From his writing one would suspect prevailing existentialist categories, heavy kerygmatic conversation, and a distinct effort of demythologizing to characterize the sermon. But in fact Bultmann's sermons are quite traditional and pietistic. After a considered study of Bultmann's sermons David Cairns makes the following interesting comment:

> Thus we cannot resist the conclusion that Bultmann's Christological substitute for the doctrine of the incarnation and work of Christ, together with his historical skepticism, has severly impoverished his theology, though it has had rather less effect on his preaching.[569]

For all the interest in demythologizing, Bultmann's sermons employ quite freely the words of traditional theology--incarnation, resurrection, salvation, Holy Spirit, etc.[579] And one wonders if the sophisticated formulations concerning kerygma, eschatological event, existential self-understanding, demythologizing, and Geschichte are perhaps too abstract for Bultmann himself when it comes to the specific task of preaching a sermon.

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[569] David Cairns, A Gospel Without Myth?, op. cit., p. 193.

[570] Cf. Bultmann, This World and the Beyond, op. cit.

Mention must also be made of one further significant abstraction in Bultmann, and that is his definition of modern man. He has accepted Heidegger's existentialist description of modern man as a working definition. Though Bultmann does not materially argue for the adoption of Heidegger's categories, it remains that there may indeed be significant gain from listening to the philospher's description of contemporary man. But in Bultmann's case, we face a situation where there is far more than an openness to a particular philosopher. Heidegger's definitions are accepted as basic presupposition and Bultmann attempts to fashion everything to fit this particular perspective on man. But that Heidegger's descriptions are abstract and limited in scope would seem to be fairly obvious. Is it not rank over-simplification and abstraction to seek to subsume all men under the rubrics of this one particular existentalist philosophy? At least, consistent with Bultmann's concern for realistic involvement with modern man, the practical theologian must respond by insisting that the folk we find in the concrete situation of the church on the American scene cannot so simply be subsumed under the abstraction of Heidegger's modern man.

Thus on these several scores there is reason to reassess the usefulness of the ideas of preaching forwarded in the early Barth and in Bultmann. From several perspectives it can be charged that the discussions about preaching are cast in such abstract and remote categories as to be of minimal effect in the life of the church in its actual ministry today.

3. A third area where the works of Barth and Bultmann present significant problems for the preacher is the area of Biblical exegesis. In raising this issue we are concerned not so much with the specific theology of preaching, but quite pointedly with one basic ingredient in the practical work of the preacher. Barth and Bultmann both agree that the church's preaching should be based on the witness of Scripture. That such is obvious with Barth is abundantly apparent from previous discussion. And the same holds for Bultmann. He insists that he nowhere in his program of demythologizing and existentialist interpretation disputes the fact that Scripture alone should be the criterion and yardstick of Christain preaching.[571] Diem's judgement of Bultmann's position is quite apt when he writes,

> Bultmann considers this ultimate form of the Word of God (the word of revelation itself) to be identical with the second, the *kerygma* of Scripture. Thus for him the critical function of theology lies between the *kerygma* of Scripture as the norm of present-day preaching and the hearer's own insight into life.[572]

In both men the task of preaching is integrally related to the task of interpreting Scripture. While both men give helpful guidelines for the task of exegesis there is still reason for an uneasiness with the suggestions forwarded. This uneasiness resides in marking certain tendencies that have developed in contemporary theology.

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[571] Bultmann, *Essays*, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

[572] Diem, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80.

Before discussing the uneasiness with the task of exegesis a word is in order by way of positive appreciation. We have noted the fact that Barth's Romans introduced a new era in Biblical studies. His reservations concerning the limitations of the prevailing historical-critical study of the Bible were quite to the point. From the standpoint of the preacher there is agreement that commentaries which limit discussion of the text to philosophical-historical-critical matters leave much to be desired. And when Barth moves to the Church Dogmatics he forwards both helpful discussion of various texts and specific guidance for exegesis. His discussion of interpretation in terms of observation, reflection, and appropriation contains much that is helpful.[573] Likewise positive appreciation of Bultmann's contribution to exegesis can be expressed. His study of The History of the Synoptic Tradition[574] and his Theology of the New Testament[575] along with various essays contain much useful material for the preacher. It must be recognized that the widespread response to his concern for demythologizing and existentialist interpretation points to the value of Bultmann's work as an exegete. Pertinent specific guidelines that are of assistance to the preacher can be found throughout Bultmann.[576] However, while giving full recognition to the positive contribution of the two men in exegesis, there are some pointed tendencies which give cause for uneasiness.

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[573] C.D. I 2, p. 722 ff.

[574] Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, op. cit.

[575] Bultmann, The Theology of the New Testament, op. cit.

[576] Cf. especially Bultmann, "Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible," Existence and Faith, op. cit., p. 289 ff.

We have already noted that the concentration on 'revelation' leads to exegesis that is problematic in that the particular concept of 'revelation' adopted appears to exercise a controlling influence on exegesis. The question persists, "Do the Biblical texts really speak as manifestly to the specific concept of 'revelation' adopted as Barth and Bultmann insist?"

A second cause of uneasiness revolves around the question of historical-critical study. Both men, of course, want to give full reign to legitimate historical-critical study of the text. But what follows such study is the source of uneasiness. It is indicative that with both men all due allowance for historical-critical study has led to a denigration of history; Barth, at least in his earlier stages, taking recourse to _Urgeschichte_ or pre-history, and Bultmann turning from his historical skepticism to _Geschichte_, or existentialist history.

Barth, for instance, argues that historical-critical study has its place, but that it must never serve ". . . the foolish end of mediating an historical truth lying behind the texts."[577] One can see validity in Barth's point if it means that the end of historical critical study is not aimed simply at proving the history behind the text. But the approach to historical-critical study as contained in Barth would seem to be fundamentally embarrassed with such study and to a certain degree would serve to undercut such study from the very beginning. At least, one can argue that historical-critical study is boxed in by the insistence that the text will have to speak within the framework of the basic presupposition of 'revelation'.

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[577] C.D. I 2, p. 494.

One distinct impression of Barth's exegetical works is that there is a prevailing tension between the dogmatician at work interpreting Scripture and the scientific Biblical scholar at the same task. In one place, as late as 1948, Barth wrote,

> . . . the time does not yet seem to have arrived when the dogmatician can accept with a good conscience and confidence the findings of his colleagues in Old and New Testament studies . . .[578]

Perhaps that tension is rooted in the fact that the Biblical scholars have not accepted readily Barth's insistence that all historical inquiry must be kept within the presupposition that the text will speak of 'revelation' as Barth conceives it. Perhaps historical inquiry by the Biblical scholars devotes too much attention to the question of the history behind the text, and Barth wants to dovetail all study of the text into the issue of "The Word in the words," with a specific idea of how "Word" is to be viewed. One must acknowledge that the latter volumes of Barth's Church Dogmatics abandon the slippery concept of Urgeschichte and he seeks to work out an idea of history in which the history of God's deeds is not torn apart from objectively ascertainable history. But the "problem" of history remains and it is perhaps still the case that the dogmatic theologian and the Biblical scholar proceed along lines with polite ignoring of one another.[579] At least, from the standpoint of the practical theologian and the 'preacher at his desk' the tension between Barth's dogmatic exegesis and the work of Biblical scholars presents manifest difficulties.

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[578] C.D. III 2, p. 1.

Further basis for uneasiness with Barth's exegesis presents itself when one looks at his suggestions for interpretation of Scripture and his sermons together. In one place Barth suggests that while the interpreter must give attention to the elements of history and saga in the text, once this is done such considerations are pushed into the background and the text must be seen in its wholeness with ". . . tested and critical naivety."[580] That sounds good enough. But when one turns to the sermons of Barth there is reason to wonder what "tested and critical naivety" really means. Repeatedly in Barth's sermons there is little evidence of the influence of the historical and critical side of this "tested and critical naivety," and the basic principle seems to be historical-critical naivety coupled with dogmatic sophistication. For instance, the sermon on the text Ephesians 2:5, "By grace you have been saved" contains no reference to the context in which the words appear. The affirmation is taken out of the context and the sermon developed by placing emphasis on individual words or phrases in the text. First, "By grace _you_ have been saved." Second, "By grace you have been saved!" Third, "By grace you have been saved." The development of the sermon is quite positive on the topic of the text, but each word, as developed, is the occasion for sophisticated dogmatic affirmations. It is as though the text were simply lifted from its context and set down in the context of dogmatic discussion of the three words underlined.[581] Such a pattern recurs again and again. The text is taken out of context, individual words or phrases are developed without reference to much testing and criticism from the Biblical context. We have cited previously Barth's Christological treatment of Old Testament texts where again there is present considerable dogmatic sophistication coupled with what appears to be considerable Biblical naivety.

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[579] Cf. the discussion by James Barr, _Old and New In Interpretation_, _op. cit._, p. 96 where Barr alleges that Barth ignores Biblical scholarship and Biblical scholarship ignores Barth.

[580] C.D. IV 2, p. 479.

The combination of these factors--manifest tension with Biblical scholars in their historical-critical studies, Biblical naivety in sermons, Christological interpretation of Old Testament texts, and insistence that texts speak to the issue of 'revelation' present to the practical theologian cause for decided uneasiness when it comes to exegesis.

The case with Bultmann also involves significant uneasiness when it comes to exegesis. We have acknowledged that there are elements of Bultmann's existentialist interpretation that are helpful, but when all texts are squeezed into the existentialist strait jacket, then the preacher working at his desk has problems with Bultmann. It would seem that the categories of existentialist focus on self-understanding are simply too constraining and the sleight of hand involved in making all texts stay within the categories of existentialist self-understanding is beyond the capacity of the ordinary parish minister.

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[581] Barth, Deliverance of the Captives, op. cit., p. 36 ff.

Another cause of uneasiness with Bultmann resides in his negative treatment of the Old Testament.[582] The concept of the Old Testament as a history of failure and simply as Law presents significant difficulties. This is not the place to enter into full discussion of Bultmann's concept of the Old Testament, but it is the place to register the fact that the particular treatment of the Old Testament found in Bultmann is a source of real uneasiness when one looks to Bultmann for guidance in exegesis. Indeed, as alluded to earlier, it is a significant source of perplexity that the prevailing emphasis on 'revelation', variously defined, has made the Old Testament a "problem."[583]

However, the greatest source of uneasiness with Bultmann's theology is the excessive concentration on hermeneutics and the accompanying neglect of exegesis that has developed from his concerns. Bultmann's programmatic essays on demythologizing[584] and hermeneutics[585] have resulted in a massive concentration on the question of hermeneutics. It is quite significant, as Dietrich Ritschl notes, that very few commentaries have grown out of the hermeneutical discussions of the past two decades.[586] The search has been for right hermeneutical principles with extensive discussion of presuppositions, history, language, reality, conscience, etc., but there is a marked vacuum in production of significant exegetical works arising from such conversations. That is distinct cause for uneasiness on the preacher's part!

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[582] Cf. Bultmann, "The Significance of the Old Testament for the Christian Faith" in Bernhard Anderson, ed., The Old Testament and Christian Faith (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 8 ff.

[583] Cf. Anderson's introductory remarks in The Old Testament and Christian Faith where the title of the essay is "The Old Testament as a Christian Problem," ibid., p. 1 ff.

[584] Bartsch, Kerygma and Myth, op. cit., p. 1 ff.

[585] Bultmann, Essays, op. cit., p. 234 ff.

James Barr, commenting on the extreme focus on the question of presuppositions in hermeneutical discussions, contends that such focus has had disastrous effects. He writes,

> Cynicism towards all biblical exegesis is spreading among students. It is, after all, as they have been taught, a matter of the presuppositions of the exegete. Interpretative anxiety, as we may call it, is one of the most obvious problems of the American theological campus.[587]

Indeed, it is the case that the exaggeration of the question of hermeneutics has been the cause of widespread perplexity among preachers. For one thing, much of the conversation in hermeneutical discussions is often quite obscure, sometimes so obscure as to be comical.[588] But the situation is more tragic than it is comical. Rudolf Bohren, a German practical theologian, has stated the case quite cogently in an essay on "The Crisis of Preaching."[589] Bohren marks the fact that much preaching in Germany is hopelessly sterile and traditional. He says, "The fruitlessness and sterility with respect to preaching of all the discussion of hermeneutics is striking and disturbing."[590] In response to Ebeling's charge that the weakness of preaching rests in the failure to take full account of the nature of the hermeneutical problem, Bohren replies,

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[586] Ritschl, Memory and Hope, op. cit., p. 53.

[587] Barr, op. cit., p. 189.

[588] Cf. Ritschl, op. cit., p. 49.

> To this I can only assent; but I must immediately ask in return whether the systematic theologian and above all the exegete have properly grasped the nature of the hermeneutical problem, whether the wretched state of preaching is largely due to a failure on the part of preachers to take sufficient account of the nature of the hermeneutical problem or whether the trouble does not lie much deeper, whether the crisis of preaching today is not largely a crisis of exegesis itself, that is, with particular reference to the theological situation in Germany, a crisis of New Testament exegesis and its methodology.[591]

With this statement many practical theologians and preachers in America can agree. The passion for hermeneutical principles, the obscure discussion of language,[592] the involved debates about presuppositions may all have a place, but the fact remains that the 'preacher at his desk' finds little concrete exegetical help in all these lofty discussions. It may well be that the concentration on hermeneutics so apparent in contemporary theology is the logical counterpart of the concentration on 'revelation' with its bias for the epistemological question, the question of 'knowledge' and 'understanding'.

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[589] Rudolf Bohren, Preaching and Community (Richmond: John Knox, 1963), p. 79 ff.

[590] Ibid., p. 80.

[591] Ibid., p. 81.

[592] Cf. the review of Robert Funk's Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God, by John Burkhart in Interpretation, April, 1968, where Burkhart specifically underlines the obscurity of much of the discussion of language in contemporary hermeneutical discussion.

Certainly not all the excesses of contemporary hermeneutical conversation can be laid at Bultmann's feet, but it is indicative that it has been primarily those of the Bultmann school who have exaggerated the discussion of hermeneutics. And it is just such a development, coupled with the paucity of significant exegetical works, that gives rise to uneasiness with Bultmann's suggestions for Biblical interpretation.

The thrust of the preceding comments is simply that while due recognition must be given to the positive factors in Barth and Bultmann in their exegesis and discussion of Biblical interpretation, there are certain basic tendencies present in the two men which present the 'preacher at his desk' with considerable problems with these suggestions.

A summary of the preceding criticisms is in order before proceeding to the final phase of this study. The first major question posed asked whether the concentration on 'revelation' in Barth and Bultmann is defensible. In this context questions about the Biblical basis for such a concentration have been raised, reservations about the epistemological bias have been expressed, the suggestion that the concentration on 'revelation' is confusing has been made, and the tendency to allow 'revelation', specifically defined, to control exegesis has been challenged. Stemming from the criticism of the concentration on 'revelation' we have voiced uneasiness with the concept of preaching which accompanies the concentration on 'revelation', specifically questioning the exegetical grounds for the definition of preaching adopted, the epistemological bias which appears to give a noetic cast to the issues of preaching, and the elaborate claims made for preaching. The second major criticism suggested that the discussion of preaching in Barth and Bultmann is often remote and abstract. And finally, we have expressed uneasiness with the kind of exegesis arising from the theologies of the two men.

Such criticisms do not intend to make null and void the pertinence of the theology and practice of preaching in Barth and Bultmann for there are definite positive factors arising from the two men. But the questions do give cause for an attempt to define preaching from a different perspective, and to this task we now proceed.

C. Appropriation of the emphasis on preaching in Barth and Bultmann. As suggested earlier, perhaps not since the Reformation has the specific task of the church's preaching been so much at the forefront of dogmatic and Biblical endeavors of Protestant theology as it is in the work of Barth and Bultmann. We may question some of the basis of the concentration on preaching, but certainly we cannot escape the questions put to the preacher by the two men. For all their manifest differences, Barth and Bultmann seek to explore the dynamics of the Christian faith with an eye sharply focused on the dynamic event of preaching.

Our first task, then, by way of appropriation of the work of the two men, will be to underscore several pointed affirmations about preaching that arise from the concentrated attention given preaching by Barth and Bultmann. It is not my contention that we must swallow the entire structure of thought of either man. One can, however, from the particular perspective of practical theology in the American situation, underscore several vital theological factors that come to expression in preaching.

1. The first obvious factor that confronts us in the work of Barth and Bultmann is the attempt to define theologically just what is happening in preaching. It is perhaps not too much to say that in the American church preaching has been taken for granted. That there will be preaching has by and large been a very pragmatic assumption, at least up until recent days when concentration on new forms of ministry or experimental ministries have been so much in the forefront of thought about the church. But it is difficult to argue that major theologians in the contemporary American context have devoted close attention to the theological dimensions of preaching. This is not to argue that American theologians and Biblical scholars have been indifferent to the issues of preaching, but they simply have not seen it as their task to explore extensively the occurrence of the sermon. The sermon has been primarily the province of practical theology and the basic discussions of preaching have arisen among working pastors and homileticians. There are, to be sure, exceptions to this generalization,[593] but the major trends of theological and Biblical studies have not focused pointedly on preaching. To be sure,

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[593] One thinks, for instance, of the work of John Knox and Donald Miller, where attention is given to the task of preaching.

as result of the influence of the work of Barth and Bultmann the subject has in recent years received more attention. But it appears to be the case that preaching has been a marginal topic in American theology of recent decades. Thus it is with enlivened attention that the practical theologian turns to Barth and Bultmann. Here are major theologians seeking to do theology from the particular perspective of what happens in preaching.

In this the preacher faces a distinct challenge. Heretofore the sermon has been the property of the preacher and the understanding of preaching has for the most part been highly idiosyncratic. Now central issues of theology are concentrated on the event of preaching in Barth and Bultmann, and whether they agree or not with one or the other, the preacher and the practical theologian are challenged to understand anew the nature of the ever-recurring event of the sermon.

2. From Barth and Bultmann the preacher is challenged to see the very mundane and routine words of the sermon as the occasion for the Word of God. Both men take the traditional phrase "Word of God" and seek exploration of what it might mean as it refers to the present event of preaching. Our study has revealed that both men work out ways for asserting that God's living voice is to be heard in the sermon. In the earlier Barth there is the tight-knit structure of the three-fold form of the Word of God which heralds the event of preaching as ". . . the event of God speaking Himself in the sphere of human events, the event of Jesus Christ's vicariate plenipotentiary."[594] There is no attempt to deny the

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[594] C.D. I 1 106.

imminent human character of the sermon, but it is Barth's affirmation that in the midst of all the humanity of preaching the miracle of God's speaking really occurs. In the latter developments of the prophetic office of Jesus Christ as His own self-witness there remains the insistence that in his present work as risen Lord Jesus Christ does not choose to go His way alone, but calls and uses quite fallible human beings through whom He speaks. As noted, while Bultmann sees the universe as a closed continuum of cause and effect, he nevertheless maintains that the vehicle of God's acting in such a world is through the word. The word of the sermon is affirmed as the arena of God's present activity, His speaking His Word. Both men, along lines discussed earlier, hold before the preacher the promise and expectation that God Himself uses the very mundane words of the sermon as occasion for His Word.

We have marked some of the problematic elements involved in the particular structures of both men. Pointed questions may be put to the way in which the whole emphasis on "Word of God" is so closely tied to a specific concept of 'revelation'. But even if one chooses to approach the understanding of the event of Jesus Christ from a perspective different from 'revelation', it remains that there is still much in Barth and Bultmann to remind us that however one describes Jesus Christ faith in Him is integrally bound to hearing the word of preaching and the preaching of that word is indeed the occasion for the Word of God confronting the Christian community.

One of the disturbingly consistent factors in both Barth and Bultmann is the recurring insistence that faith is related centrally to a word of witness which God uses as His Word to man. The difficulty with history in both men rests, at least in part, on the settled conviction that faith cannot be based on historical certainty, nor should it. There may indeed be just cause for seeking to correct the alleged denigration of history in Barth and/or Bultmann. But if historical inquiry has as its purpose the attempt to make faith secure through the documentation of historical occurrences then Barth and Bultmann, each in his own way, stand as healthy corrective reminding us that such faith is misplaced. What we have in the New Testament is not historical account, but faith documents seeking to proclaim the word of the event of Jesus Christ. And one vital occasion of the witness to what happened in Jesus Christ is the word of preaching. Faith revolves around that word as Word of God to us.

Certain developments in recent theology in America reflect a distinct uneasiness with such an insistence, and in this I refer, on the one hand, to the so-called "death of God theology" and, on the other, to the insistence upon "spiritual experiences" as proof of lively faith in God. Could it be that basic to the "death of God theology" is the implication that if God is alive he will give us more to go on than faith in the word of witness? Perhaps the alleged death of God is rooted in a fundamental disappointment that we do have no more in hand than a Word. What is demanded is a more demonstrable expression of the presence of God, and in the absence of such the conclusion follows that "God is dead." Manifestly, such theology seeks more than a word of witness as the basis of faith. Likewise, the insistence on "spiritual experiences" rests on the idea that surely faith must have something demonstrable to go on. Demand for varieties of "experiences," from the more dramatic 'glossalalia' experiences to the description of less dramatic "personal experiences" of one kind or another, reflect unrest in seeking to live solely from the word of witness to the event of Jesus Christ. Faith must have more than the Word, and account of various experiences serve to be that 'more', and in the case of some various 'spiritual experiences' are used to argue that God is not "dead." Both trends evidence dissatisfaction with the insecurity of faith in the Word of God confronting us in preaching. That is indeed too meager a base for some.

The point here is simply to underline the fact that in Barth and Bultmann, for all their differences, there is the challenge to the preacher to re-examine present preaching as the living Word of God. In places, either or both of the theologies of the two men may need correction. In places, they may indeed seek to claim too much for preaching. But in quite substantial ways both Barth and Bultmann, each with his own distinct approach, challenge the preacher to see the sermon not simply as routine words, not simply as 'just preaching', but expectantly as an occasion of God's speaking His Word to His people.

3. Another way to put the challenge posed by Barth and Bultmann is to say that in preaching the reality of what took place in Jesus Christ is present to man today. Bultmann perhaps goes too far in his locating the fullness of the eschatological event in Jesus Christ in preaching as eschatological event. But there is present in this particular way of putting things the challenge to see preaching as a vehicle for communication

of the meaning of what took place, not simply in terms of discussing various things about that event, but in beholding the sermon as a present expression of the reality of God's grace. The sermon is an 'event', a 'deed', and not just words. Something dynamic happens in the sermon, and the dynamic of the word of the sermon partakes of the same reality as the dynamic of the appearance of Jesus Christ. In the preaching of the event of Jesus Christ the reality of Jesus Christ is present to man today. Without getting involved in all the questions about the concentration on 'revelation', and with an openness to go beyond Bultmann's historical skepticism and Barth's early denigration of history, it remains that both men set before us the affirmation that the event of Jesus Christ gave rise to the preaching of that event, and in preaching of the event the reality of Jesus Christ is present. Such a conception certainly serves to challenge the moribund ideas of preaching that all too often prevail. In the American situation where the sermon often gets squeezed out of the picture by a multitude of pragmatic institutional concerns and the frantic cry of disturbed people for personal counseling, it is quite easy to begin to look upon the sermon as a necessary evil. The response is often so discouraging, the work in responsible preparation so hard and time-consuming, and the medium of the sermon so problematic as a vehicle of communication that it is quite easy to abandon any sense of significance for the sermon. Just at this point Barth and Bultmann with their elaborate claims at least demand of us a re-examination of what is really happening. If one is basically committed to the reality of what happened in Jesus Christ, and if it is the case that the sermon based on the texts of Scripture holds the promise of being a present expression of the reality that comes to expression in Jesus Christ, then indeed, perhaps there is reason to reassess the priorities of one's ministry.

4. Again, it can be emphasized that Barth and Bultmann challenge the preacher to see the sermon as an attempt to explore the meaning of Jesus Christ in the immediate contemporary situation. There is a decided drive toward understanding the gospel in the present situation in both Barth and Bultmann. Barth makes applicatio an integral part of Biblical interpretation. In one place he refers to the movement away from exegesis to application, and insists that this move is not arbitrary. He writes, "We know that it is necessary because for Church proclamation itself the purpose of exegesis is address, and the significance of explicatio is applicatio."[595] The witness ministry of the church is characterized as consisting of declaration of the Gospel, explanation of the Gospel, and evangelical address. The latter refers specifically to a pointed concern for application, for understanding the meaning of the gospel for men today. This concern prevails in Barth from the writing of the Romans commentary to the final volumes of the Church Dogmatics. It runs throughout the essays and characterizes his ethical involvement in the life of society. And it most importantly occurs in his understanding of preaching. And such is, of course, abundantly apparent in Bultmann's concerns. His existentialist bias, his idea of kerygma as 'personal address', his consuming passion to interpret with integrity the scandal of the gospel for

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[595] C.D. I 2, p. 884.

'modern man', and his pervasive interest in hermeneutics and demythologizing all have as their focus pertinent understanding of the meaning of the gospel for the present situation. To be sure, it is possible to fault either Barth or Bultmann in the particular way they give expression to the issues of the meaning of the gospel for our day. But one cannot fault their basic concern. Both men see the preaching of the gospel as containing not only the dynamic of the Word of God, but also as a dynamic factor in understanding the present situation. In a day when preaching is often vapid and remote, couched in theological abstractions and technical words, the concern of Barth and Bultmann stands as particular challenge to the preacher. This is, of course, no new challenge. But it is significant that the elaborate theological exploration of the meaning of preaching does at many points contain a prevailing concern for the understanding of preaching as a significant event in the present situation. We may argue, as has been the case earlier, that often the discussion of preaching in Barth and Bultmann is remote and abstract, but this is not meant to deny that basic to this discussion, however remote and abstract it may on occasion be, is a prevailing concern to see the sermon as a dynamic hic et nunc expression of the reality of Jesus Christ as He materially affects the specific situation of the hearers of the sermon.

5. One further theological challenge, and in this we take recourse basically to Barth, has to do with the proposal to define preaching fundamentally in the category of witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We have marked the fact that one central facet of Barths' theology of preaching is the definition of preaching in terms of witness.

In the prolegomena of Barth's Church Dogmatics preaching as one form of the three-fold form of the Word of God bears the marked character of witness to revelation. In using the characterization of witness, Barth appears to avoid the peril of an absolute identification of the Word of God preached and written with the Word of God revealed. Both preaching and scripture have the distinct characteristic of 'attestation', pointing beyond themselves. Later discussion expands more substantively the understanding of preaching as one form of the church's multiformed ministry of witness. It seems to me that the definition of the vocation of the church as witness and preaching as one form of that witness offer inviting possibilities in both the doctrine of the church and the consideration of preaching as ethical action.

The early discussion of preaching in the Prolegomena is marked by an exclusive interest in the traditional Reformation concentration on Word and sacrament as identifying charcteristics of the true church. Beginning with the marked concern to write dogmatics which specifically set church proclamation at the center of concern meant that the idea of the church stayed pretty much within the traditional Reformation definition of things. Church proclamation, as a form of the Word of God, referred to preaching and sacraments. The discussion of witness also stayed within traditional framework, referring to proclamation as sermon and sacraments and scripture as the basic forms of witness to revelation. As indicated earlier, in this framework where the presupposition of revelation controls materially all that is said, there is an exaggeration of the claims for preaching as witness to revelation, and an accompanying depreciation of other facets of the church's life. But by the time Barth turns to the writing of the vocation of the Church in IV 3 the discussion of witness moves on a broader base and there preaching is only one form of the church's ministry. It occurs to me that there is basis for a healthy re-examination of the doctrine of the church in the way Barth discusses the vocation of the Christian and the Christian community as witness. It can be argued that the traditional Reformation definition centering on Word and sacrament arose out of a time when the concern for the outgoing 'mission' of the church was minimal. The basic concern centered more on the purity of the church, and for that the definition of the church in terms of Word rightly preached and heard and sacraments rightly administered may have been quite to the point. But perhaps that way of putting things does not readily reflect the full Biblical doctrine of the Church. Certainly the widespread anxiety about the nature of the church and the obvious interest in reassessing the mission of the church in recent decades would serve to give notice of basic deficiencies and uncertainties about the more static definition of the church in Reformation categories. My argument is that Barth's doctrine of the vocation of the church as witness offers an inviting avenue for exploration. The church is defined in terms of its life as bearing witness to Jesus Christ as Lord, and in the fulfillment of this task a more positive appreciation of the many facets of the church's life is possible. Preaching and sacrament as forms of witness are only two forms and there is in Barth's discussion of these entities an interesting shift of interest and definition. For instance, as noted, the sacraments are subsumed under the discussion of fellowship as a form of witness. Preaching, while seen as a basic form of the church's ministry, one whose absence would mark a definite deficiency in the church's life, is nevertheless discussed in much more realistic and modest terms. Further, it can be argued that the focus of concern in the discussion of the vocation of the Church in IV 3 is not epistemology, with the suggested limitations as discussed above. Rather the discussion of witness has to do, as indicated previously, with ethics, the second form of the command of God in the discussion of the doctrine of reconciliation. The question basic to the definition of the church in its witness function is the question of obedience, of right human behavior. When the church's life is seen as witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ it offers the opportunity to discuss the church in quite realistic terms as all facets of the church are queried from this standpoint. And, quite importantly, the definition of the church in terms of witness fosters a delightful lightheartedness about the church's life. The church is seen as partner to the risen Lord who moves in the world today, makes himself known, and uses a peculiar people as his covenant partners. This means that while the church can certainly take seriously her life as witness, she can also take herself less seriously and not focus so depressingly on producing results. Her task is not measuring results, but rather bearing faithful witness in the confidence that the growth and harvest are not her business, but those of the risen Lord who in his own way and in his own time manifests himself in the world today.

When in the context of the discussion of the church's vocation of witness Barth returns to the topic of preaching in Volume IV 3 there preaching is seen as one form of the church's multiform witness. Highlighting the witness character of preaching presents a definite challenge to the preacher as he seeks to theologically define what he is doing in the pulpit. His task there is not manipulation of response on the part of people, his task is not instruction or teaching, his task is not entertainment or oratory, his task is not counseling, his task is not 'evangelism'. The church has other forms of ministry particularly suited for these concerns where they are legitimate. The task of the preacher is the utilization of the form of the sermon in the context of corporate worship for germane witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the immediate meaning of that Lordship. Of course, Biblical exposition is integral to such a witness, but this is not the occasion for Biblical instruction. It is the occasion for a lively, one-sided, pointed witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ on the basis of a particular text in a particular situation. And the preacher's behavior in his fulfilmment of the task of witness is seen in the context of Barth's discussion of witness as ethics. That leads us to the major proposal of this work. The theological definition of preaching as a form of the witness of the church raises the question of proper ethical obedience as it concerns the preacher's specific behavior.

6. What is proposed as the burden of my response to the focus on preaching in Barth and Bultmann is that there is need to define preaching in terms of ethical action. My argument has been that in the early portions of the Church Dogmatics and in the works of Bultmann preaching is defined primarily in the context of the discussion of epistemology, with the accompanying focus on 'revelation' and preaching as correlate of 'revelation', the means by which 'revelation' becomes present event. Various

reservations have been expressed about this context for the discussion of preaching. While we can recognize, as we have sought to do, several distinct challenges that confront the preacher in this scheme of discussion of preaching, it would seem that the reservations about preaching as correlate of revelation call for expansion by considering preaching as ethical action. My contention is that Barth gives us a quite suggestive clue for adding to the discussion of preaching the idea of preaching as one form of the church's obedient ethical response to the command of God.

The basic cues, as indicated earlier, come from three lines in Barth. First, he resolutely insists that ethics is an integral part of dogmatic discussion. The question accompanying the presence of the Word of God in Church proclamation embraces necessarily the question of ethics, that is, the question of what is good human behavior. Secondly, as referred to on several occasions, the definition of the Church's vocation in terms of witness, and preaching as one form of that ministry, is contained in the context of the discussion of witness as the ethical action corresponding to the theological affirmation of the self-witness of Jesus Christ in his prophetic office. And thirdly, even in the earlier discussion of preaching in the Prolegomena, one consistent note in the definition of preaching referred to the commission of preaching. Preaching is seen as obedient response to the commission or command of God given in the Word of God. Following the lines suggested here we are in the general context of ethics as we seek to keep an eye focused on the specific behavior of the man who stands in the pulpit as representative of the community and fulfills the task of preaching obedient to a commission from God.

What I am proposing is that these cues from Barth need to be more forcefully developed in contemporary conversation about preaching. The elaborate theological affirmations made for preaching may be quite in order, though, of course, debatable as theological propositions. But to limit conversation of preaching to theological definitions about Word of God as preached is to look in only one direction--the objective side of preaching. What is needed is a more deliberate look at the subjective or human side of preaching as a quite mundane activity seeking to express obedience to the commission of the Word of God, and to do this manifestly in the same discussion in which we explore the lofty theological affirmations about preaching. The tragedy of too much of the discussion of preaching today is that it is either highly abstracted theological discussion or overly pragmatic suggestion of homiletical guidelines. Just as theology without ethics leads to scholasticism and ethics without theology leads to moralism or legalism, so lofty theological discussion of preaching without attention to the kind of human behavior which corresponds to such affirmations leads to meaningless abstractions or overly neat theological categories; and the discussion of the specific task of preaching from the standpoint of homiletical practice without attention to the theological definition of the task leads to indefensible pragmatism and a highly idiosyncratic methodology. Thus I am proposing that preaching be discussed as ethical action, as an act of appropriate human behavior in response to the gospel.

It is germane to ethical conversation to seek to look at particular cases and actions and pursue the question of appropriate human behavior for Christians. Indeed, it is the specific task of practical theology to raise the question of proper human behavior as it concerns the fulfillment of the tasks of the ordained or professional ministry. Just as there is occasion to seek to ask, and to answer, the question of appropriate human behavior as it applies to the Christian who bears particular responsibility in the business community, government, or family, so it is proper to ask the question of the ethics involved in fulfilling the responsibility of preaching in the life of the church. In such a case we are simply asking the question of specific human behavior in response to belief in Jesus Christ as it pertains to one of the most characteristic acts of the Christian community, namely preaching.

Of course, it is not necessary to limit the case for preaching as ethical action to the specialized case of the man who fulfills the task of preaching on behalf of the church. We can recognize that in one sense preaching is an act of the church. It is the community which bears responsibility for this act as a part of its obedient witness to the gospel. The church may indeed appoint and commission from its number certain individuals to fulfill the specific action of preaching, but that one is involved in representative action. He acts on behalf of a community of people who see as pertinent to their obedient ethical response to the gospel the particular act of preaching.

Thus preaching can be seen as ethical action on these two levels; as a part of the community of believers' response of obedience to previous hearing of the gospel and belief in Jesus Christ as Lord, one form of her multiform ministry of witness; and more specifically as ethical action in terms of the behavior of individual Christians who conceive as a part of their response to belief in the gospel taking up the particular task of preaching for the sake of the church.

Before proceeding to discuss the characteristics of ethically responsible preaching it is germane to give some indication of the stance assumed in the following discussion. As is abundantly apparent the discussion of the ways of 'doing ethics' today is marked by widely divergent approaches. There is, for instance, debate about the use of 'context' and 'principles' in arriving at ethical decisions. Men such as Paul Lehmann, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Joseph Sittler, Alexander Miller, Joseph Fletcher, James Gustafson, and Charles West are characterized as 'contextualists' or 'situation ethicists'. On the other hand men such as John C. Bennett, Paul Ramsey, Clinton Gardner, and Edward Long have written in criticism of the 'contextualist' approach and have been classed generally in the category of 'principle ethicists'.[596] As indicated by James Gustafson it is readily evident that the use of a typology such as employed in the 'context' versus 'principle' debate is highly questionable. The general terms are not useful when men of such different approaches are lumped under one label or the other, and more importantly, as Gustafson argues, it is a "misplaced argument" inasmuch as it becomes clear that wherever one may choose to start both context and principles come into significant consideration.[597] It is beyond the scope of this work to seek to describe and evaluate the different writers in the field of ethics today or to seek to enter extensively into discussion of the different approaches. It is, however, in place to indicate that in what follows basic affinity with Barth in his approach to ethics is acknowledged. I do not mean to imply that in what follows there is full representation of all Barth has to say about ethics, nor that what is espoused here fully represents Barth. But I do seek to move from basic cues given from Barth, just as we have taken basic cues from his work for the primary concern of this essay, namely the inclusion of preaching as a legitimate concern of Christian ethics.

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[596] Cf. James M. Gustafson, "Context Versus Principles: A Misplaced Debate in Christian Ethics," in Martin Marty & Dean G. Peerman, New Theology No. 3 (New York: Macmillan, 1966), pp. 69-102, for a summary discussion of the alleged debate between context and principles in Christian ethics today.

The stance assumed in the following discussion includes at least the following major considerations. (1) The basic reality of life in the world is the reality of God's grace manifest in Jesus Christ. All assessments of the human situation and all attempts to determine what is good human behaviour move from this basic perspective. (2) Jesus Christ is Lord of all life. He is not simply Lord of the church, but of all men, reigning over all principalities and powers in the world. (3) In Jesus Christ, God has reconciled the world unto Himself, and has conquered the reign of sin. (4) In Jesus Christ God's Word to man comes not only as grace, but also as command. Man's freedom is established in God's grace, but man is to use his freedom to obey the command of God. (5) God's command is concrete. It comes to man in specific situations in life demanding responsible use of man's freedom in the concrete relations and action of his life. (6) Jesus Christ as the living Lord makes Himself known in the world today, but in His action calls and commissions a community of people to be His covenant partners whose primary vocation is the ministry of witness to the reality of God's grace in Jesus Christ. The ministry of witness assumes many forms in the life of individuals and in the life of the community of Christians. (7) In seeking to discern the reality of God's grace in Jesus Christ and the character of good human behaviour in response to God's grace the witness of the Bible is a primary factor. The Bible does not give 'rules' for behaviour, but is witness to the grace of God in Jesus Christ and to the character of the claim of grace upon the believer. (8) Faith in Jesus Christ involves the believer in the community of believers, the church, and it is in this community that one finds basic guidance in understanding God's grace and in making ethical decisions. (9) The primary question in seeking to determine what is good human behaviour is not 'What ought I to do?', but rather 'What has God in Jesus Christ done for you and for all men?' (10) Ethical inquiry legitimately involves the analysis from many standpoints of the situation in which one seeks to determine appropriate Christian behaviour. Nevertheless, it remains that such social-psychological-political analysis is an ancillary discipline in Christian ethics, with priority being given to such items as listed in propositions one through nine.

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[597] Ibid., pp. 88-89.

It is readily apparent that the ten considerations indicated are debatable as basis for a stance in determining responsible ethical action for Christians. However, let it be recognized that they are forwarded as one possible stance, as a working hypothesis for further consideration of preaching as ethical action. I am fully aware of the tentative character of some of the propositions and conscious of the unguarded character of such a listing. However, to seek to do more than expose such a stance would involve us in a discussion of unmanageable length.

It should be noted that fundamental to the argument of this work is the contention that in making dogmatic assertions the ethical question is of necessity involved. And further, in seeking to arrive at ethical decisions it is necessary to bring into essential consideration dogmatic considerations. I am particularly concerned to explore this procedure as it pertains to preaching. As stated in various places in this essay it seems to me that the interrelation of dogmatic and ethics, of theological affirmation and practical behaviour, has not been sufficiently explored as it concerns preaching. Theological conclusions about preaching have been too often left as just that, lofty assertions. And concern for the practical behaviour of the preacher in the task of preaching has often been devoid of germane dogmatic consideration. What follows is an attempt to try to describe some of the characteristics of preaching as an act of responsible ethical behaviour which stem from the previously discussed theological affirmations about preaching.[598]

Three particular characteristics of preaching as responsible ethical action are discussed below. It is, of course, quite possible to expand the discussion by consideration of other pertinent factors in preaching. For instance, no extended discussion is devoted to questions pertaining to the form of the sermon as a matter of ethical concern. Such an ommission does not imply that questions of form are neutral. Other questions could properly be pursued. However, in the three areas chosen an attempt is made to indicate at least three areas of vital importance in consideration of preaching as ethical action. The discussion of these matters is intended to be suggestive and not exhaustive. That also gives some clue as to the nature of the discussion of the characteristics chosen. They are not intended to be hard and fast rules, but rather directives for preaching which are generally valid. The determination of the guidelines for ethical action should be specific, but care should be exercised not to establish a kind of Pharisaism, turning guidelines into precise rules, thus making the Christian's faith relate to rules and not to the living Lord.[599]

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[598] *Supra*, pp. 317-329.

First, the sermon as a form of ethical action bears the distinct characteristic of a representative act. The man in the pulpit acts there as a representative of the Christian community in its attempt to fulfill the responsibility of obedience to a commission. To be sure, the man in the pulpit acts as an individual Christian in his own obedience, but quite decisively he acts representatively as he embodies in his action of preaching the church's response to previous hearing of the gospel and belief in Jesus Christ as Lord. Others in the community of believers bear distinct responsibility in other areas of the church's multiform ministry of witness. But out of its midst the church has chosen this man to embody for the whole body the obedient ethical response of preaching.

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[599] Cf. C.D. III 4, pp. 3-31.

Perhaps this is a fairly obvious assertion. But it seems to me that it needs to be crucially underlined as a distinct characteristic of the behavior of the man in the pulpit precisely because there are set loose in our midst homiletical traditions that would serve to undermine the representative character of the obedience manifest in preaching. In too many cases the sermon is viewed as the private province of the preacher. Supposedly the sermon is 'his'. He is free to say and do what he pleases in the pulpit. One of the liabilities of the preaching tradition in the American situation is the hangover of individualism that reached its full flower in the nineteenth century. In the English speaking church, at least, the nineteenth century was an era of 'great preachers'. The occurrence of 'great preaching' is not to be deplored, but one can certainly deplore the idea that the sermon is the private province of various individuals, however gifted they may have been. It is my judgement that the American tradition has been especially liable to a kind of personality domination of preaching which fosters the idea that the preacher 'owns the pulpit'. To be sure, the preacher is not in the pulpit simply to pamper the palates of the congregation, but neither is he there to indulge in individual idiosyncrasis. The pulpit, in fact, is not 'free'. It is bound, just as the entire Christian community is bound, in servitude to Jesus Christ. Where the pulpit is the platform for highly individualistic opinions on the part of the preacher, perhaps it is highly proper for the congretation to raise its voice in protest. The man in the pulpit is not there to parade his own brand of individual expertise, but rather acts in the pulpit on behalf of the entire community of faith in its effort to respond to the commission given by her Lord. The pulpit is one place where the church seeks to express her obedience as the witness to be born assumes the particular form of a sermon.

Thus one distinct characteristic of the sermon as a form of the church's ethical action is its character as a representative act. From one standpoint, the man in the pulpit represents the Lord of the Church who seeks to speak anew to his people, but at the same time the man in the pulpit represents the community of faith in its present obedient response to previous hearing and faith. Such recognition should be decisive in understanding the particular behavior of one who assays to preach.

Consistent with the recognition of the representative character of preaching is the recognition that the sermon 'ordinarily' occurs in the context of the corporate worship of the church. The sermon as a representative act takes place when the community of faith gathers for worhip. This factor brings into focus the fact that the sermon is addressed to a baptized community. The action of the sermon as an act of obedience seeks to explore the meaning of faith and obedience for a peculiar people, namely those who by their confession are 'on the spot' as the people of God. We have marked the fact that Bultmann reveals a particular weakness just at this point. It would seem to me that Bultmann's program of preaching and his avowed deficient interest in ecclesiology would infer that preaching is primarily 'evangelistic preaching'. That is, the decision to accept the 'kerygma' in faith seems to be a 'new' decision upon each new hearing of the word of preaching. Such an approach would seem to call into question week after week one's prior commitment of faith. It is at this point that it seems to me that for all his 'radical' interests, Bultmann is depressingly 'traditional'. He may make a case for demythologizing, and perhaps even dehistorizing, but he nevertheless stays in the well-worn tradition of pietism and revivalism, indicated by the highly individualistic and 'decision' orientation of his program. My point, however, is that the sermon is not the occasion for 'evangelism'. The preacher addresses a baptized community and the character of the sermon is post-baptismal. As a representative act of obedience the concern of the sermon is discerning the promise and the claim, the mercy and the judgement, the consolation and the challenge of the living Lord as He makes history with His people today. It should not, of course, be denied that within the baptized community there are wide varieties of commitment and faith. Confusion, doubt, disillusionment are present in the gathered congregation. But the presence of such does not become rationale for the preacher's calling into question the baptism of the gathered community and making preaching an occasion of arrogance denying the validity of the meager measure of faith present in the congregation. This does not mean that the sermon takes on the character of simple instruction. It distinctly involves the heralding of the good news of the Gospel to the community of believers. It is in one sense a celebration of the joy that characterizes the life of the community of faith that knows the grace of God in Jesus Christ. The sermon will come as fresh announcement of the good news, and far many nominal Christians who may be more 'outside' than 'inside' the life of faith it may be the occasion for renewal of baptismal vows in his own life. (This should not be construed to involve some liturgical ceremony of renewal of baptismal vows.) Certainly even in the baptized community the preacher bears responsibility, in faithfulness to the text of the Biblical witness, to highlight the indicative of God's grace in Jesus Christ. But it nevertheless remains that the type of action involved in preaching incorporates the recognition that it is a word spoken to a community of baptized believers.

The first characteristic of preaching as a form of ethical action is its representative character. The man in the pulpit, a member of the community of faith, seeks to fulfill representatively a task which the church sees as pertinent to its obedient ethical responsibility of witness to Jesus Christ. The preacher thus acts, in one sense, for the church in this act of obedience; and he also acts in the church.

A second fundamental characteristic of the sermon as responsible ethical action has to do with the 'hearing' character of the sermon. 'Hearing', in this instance, does not refer to the congregation's 'hearing'. That, of course, is a vital factor of the total event of preaching as an event in the context of corporate worship. But by elevating 'hearing' as an essential ingredient of preaching I am seeking to point to the responsibility of the preacher in his 'hearing'. In too many instances homiletical conversation turns too rapidly to the question of 'what to say' or 'how to say it'. Admittedly attention in time must be focused at this point. But prior to speaking on the part of the preacher there is the necessity of responsible 'hearing' on his part. On behalf of the community of faith he fulfills regularly the task of seeking to 'hear' in order that he may subsequently fulfill the responsibility of speaking.

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Recourse to the category of 'hearing' provides a means to explore the relation of the Biblical witness to present preaching. Several important issues concerning responsible ethical action come into focus in considering preaching's dependence upon the Biblical writings. The following discussion seeks to explore four specific matters which are involved in the 'hearing' characteristic of preaching. First, and quite fundamental, a question is raised about the fundamental basis of the sermon. What is, or what should be, the basis of what is said in the sermon? Second, issues in the method of exegesis reflect distinct understandings of ethical responsibility. Third, the character of 'hearing' as a present event is germane. And fourth, 'hearing' as 'vicarious hearing' is discussed. All of these matters involve understanding of preaching as an ethically responsible action.

The first issue exposed in the question of the 'hearing' nature of preaching is the question of the fundamental basis of the sermon. If a man in fulfilment of the responsibility of the congregation to obey the command of God by the specific activity of preaching takes to himself, or is given, the task of preaching a sermon there is a primary question concerning the basis of what he says in preaching. From whence does he derive the basic assertions of the sermon? Upon whom or what does he depend in shaping the content of the sermon? The traditional answer to such questions is, of course, "The Bible." We have noted that both Barth and Bultmann pointedly insist upon preaching's material dependence on the Bible as the basis of the sermon. Under the influence of Barth and Bultmann coupled with a host of other influences the contemporary theological scene is fairly unanimous in making a case for Biblical preaching. This has, of course, been the traditional stance. But it has certainly been questionable that preaching in the American tradition has readily accepted such material dependence. As indicated earlier Wilhelm Pauck greeted Barth's insistence on Biblical preaching with a note of scepticism contending that American preaching has characteristically been preaching on religious topics.[600] It seems to me that a good case can be made for the fact that while preaching in the United States has maintained a formal relation to the Biblical witness, materially the substance of much, perhaps a majority, of preaching in this country has depended essentially on sources other than the Bible as the basis of the sermon. While it is not the intent here to explore in detail the history of preaching in the United States, it is perhaps in order to mention several primary factors which have shaped the character of American preaching and which raise real question as to whether the Bible has functioned as the material basis of preaching.

Certainly one predominant influence on American preaching in the 20th century has been the preaching of Harry Emerson Fosdick. It is not overstatement to assert that no other single figure so influenced the pattern of American preaching in the first half of this century. It is the case that Fosdick did on occasion utilize Biblical material in his sermons but it remains that germane dependence on the Biblical witness was not integral to Fosdick's scheme of preaching. In 1928 he wrote a stirring article which appeared in Harper's magazine entitled "What Is the Matter

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[600] _Supra_, p. 145.

With Preaching?"[601] where he argued that the fundamental purpose of preaching was to answer some burning problem which existed in the lives of the hearers of the sermon. On this score preaching took on a definite 'problem-solving' character and, according to Fosdick, the criteria for the effectiveness of a sermon consisted of the number of people who came to the preacher after the sermon seeking individual counseling. The important facet of this idea of preaching resides in the fact that the basis of the sermon was fundamentally the preacher's religious genius in defining the existing problems and providing an answer. If the Bible proved useful in such an endeavor, well and good. But it was not at all integral to preaching that the preacher turn to the Bible for the basis of what he had to say. The essential source of the sermon consists of the preacher's religious genius. Such a pattern of preaching contributed significantly to the prevailing idea of 'topical preaching' in America.

A second factor shaping American preaching may be characterized as a basic embarrassment with the Bible. There has, of course, always existed a formal insistence on the Bible as the basis of the Church's life and her preaching. But in examining the tradition of preaching in this country with its strong dependence on topical preaching of various stripes, one wonders if there did not exist for quite some time in the 19th and 20th century a basic embarrassment with the Bible. Perhaps it can be put this way. On the one hand the formal dependence on the Bible was acknowledged, but on the other hand the findings of critical study of the Bible left the preacher somewhat insecure in his turning to the Bible. It is the case that critical study of the Bible had a difficult time finding its way into the mainstream of the church's life. In many cases critical study of the Bible was based primarily in the universities on the Continent, arising 'outside' the church. The preacher might even admit to the validity of many conclusions reached in such study. But such critical study did not find its way into the pulpit, or even the preachers study, for some time. The result of this meant that when the preacher turned to the Bible there existed a basic uneasiness or embarrassment with the Bible, and the substance of what was said in the pulpit was derived from sources other than the Bible. Such a situation laid the groundwork for various brands of topical preaching. The fundamentalist preacher might well continue insisting that the Bible is the infallible Word of God, but the basic character of fundamentalist preaching consisted of sermons on orthodox doctrine which utilized the Bible in a proof-text fashion. Others who did not buy the fundamentalist line might derive 'topics' from the Bible, but the Bible was used in an atomistic way, small phrases or verses being taken out of context and utilized to develop religious topics. Or in many cases the Bible was used for character studies of various Biblical personalities with appropriate moral lessons being drawn from such study. In such cases Biblical material was used primarily as illustrative material. In much preaching the sermon was either doctrinal instruction or moral advice, and in either case the Bible was basically incidental to what was said. The formal relation to the Bible was maintained, but the material basis of the sermon was derived from sources other than the Bible, perhaps from the received orthodox doctrine, perhaps from the preacher's religious genius, perhaps from the prevailing moralism of the time. My hypothesis is that such patterns of preaching arose from a prevailing uncertainty about or embarrassment with the Bible as the Word of God.

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[601] Harry Emerson Fosdick, "What Is the Matter With Preaching?" Harpers, CLVII (July, 1928), 133-41.

Still another dominant factor in the tradition of American preaching in the 20th century was the influence of the 'social gospel'. Professor E. T. Thompson has documented the way in which such figures as Walter Rauschenbusch and Washington Gladden influenced American preaching with their awakened conscience on social issues.[602] The result of such influence meant that the substance of preaching depended on identification of some social issue and the corresponding Christian answer to such. One cannot deny that such men struck a needed note, but it remains that the preaching arising from social concern did not materially depend on the Biblical witness as the basis of preaching.

Another significant influence on American preaching in the 20th century has been the revivalistic-evangelistic pattern of preaching. While many things can be said of this type of preaching the central matter seems to be 'preaching for a decision' which engenders a 'conversion' experience. In such preaching the formal relation to the Bible is maintained, witness the frequent "The Bible says, . . " of such preaching in the style of Billy Graham. But I would argue that the substantial basis of such preaching is not so much the Biblical witness as it is the particular experience or idea of 'conversion experience' held by the preacher. The Bible is utilized to illustrate or stimulate the 'conversion experience', but it would not be hard to elicit abundant evidence of very questionable utilization of the Bible in such preaching.

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[602] E. T. Thompson, Changing Emphases in American Preaching (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1943), p. 137 ff.

I am not trying to damn the various patterns of preaching that have entered the mainstream of preaching in America, but I am suggesting that various conditions and traditions which seriously undercut the material relation of the sermon to the Biblical witness have been dominant influences in the heritage of preaching in this country. One bit of evidence supporting this contention is the homiletical literature which characterizes the American tradition. We cannot, of course, make a thorough survey of such at this point. But what we can do is underscore the fact that in much of this literature "Biblical' or 'expository' preaching is suggested as one possible type of preaching. No less a figure than Henry Sloan Coffin could write a book in 1926 entitled What To Preach[603] and proceed to address the preacher's dilemma in facing the question of what to preach by suggesting that one could preach expository sermons, or doctrinal sermons, or ethical sermons, or pastoral sermons, or evangelistic sermons. In the last four categories the Bible may prove useful, but Coffin's suggestions seem to indicate that it is simply one among many sources for the different types of sermons. Witness to this scheme of things could be multiplied by reference to other homiletical treatises characteristic of the American tradition. When Donald G. Miller wrote his book on Biblical preaching[604] in 1954 he sought to make a case for Biblical preaching by arguing the advantages of this type of preaching. Even where he made persuasive theological assertions for Biblical preaching, still there had to be a very pragmatic argument indicating the particular benefits of such preaching as opposed to other possible types.

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[603] Henry Sloan Coffin, What To Preach (New York: Harper, 1926).

[604] Donald G. Miller, Fire in Thy Mouth, op. cit.

My argument is simply this: the American tradition of preaching has been one in which the fundamental basis of what is said in the pulpit has been an open question. The preacher might turn to the Biblical witness, but this was just one option. He may depend upon his own religious genius, he may choose to turn to contemporary literature or current events and make comments on these. He may depend basically upon his particular 'religious experience', and in something of the line of Schleiermacher, make preaching a form of 'self-exposition'. He may take problems in the congregation as the cue for preaching and seek to make cogent remarks about one or another of these problems. He may gather a cluster of anecdotes around some chosen theme. The effective result of such patterns means that the sermon has been left to the mercy of the particular preacher and his peculiar idiosyncrasies. The sermon has been the province of the preacher and the essential basis of what is said might be derived from any one of several sources.

However, and this is the other side of my argument, if one is to espouse a theology of preaching such as we have sought to derive from the writings of Barth and Bultmann, then the question of the basis of the sermon is not an open one. The question of 'right human behavior' becomes a quite pertinent one when it comes to the specific behavior of the preacher in determining the essential basis of what he is to say. The shape of the theology of preaching establishes in significant ways the behavior of the preacher at this point. One of the most decisive questions involved in preaching revolves around the question of the basis of the sermon. It is clear from previous study that the basis of preaching consistent with the theology of preaching defined is the Biblical witness. There exists not simply a formal and traditional relation between the sermon and the Biblical witness of prophets and apostles, but a material relation which raises the question of the basis of the sermon to one of ethical integrity. 'Hearing' the Biblical witness becomes an irreducible facet of the ethical action of preaching. It may be quite true, as Barth contends, that there is a difference between Biblical instruction and preaching, but it remains that one decisive and consistent characteristic of preaching as responsible ethical action, as right human behavior in response to the command of God as it concerns preaching, is the characteristic of responsible 'hearing' as constitutive for the subsequent event of speaking.

A second factor in the responsibility of 'hearing' centers in the task of 'hearing' a particular text for a particular sermon. The general assertion of preaching's dependence upon the Biblical witness takes the shape of specific 'hearing' of particular texts on given occasions. Indeed, it is at this point that many currents of contemporary Biblical and theological study converge. It is well and good to make general theological statements about preaching and to discuss historical-critical method in abstracto and hermeneutical principles in isolation from exegesis of a specific text. But all such generalizations are cast aside when the preacher sits down to exercise the responsibility of listening to a particular text or combination of texts for a given sermon. What does ethical responsibility involve at this point?

It is obvious that just at this point important differences in various theologies and stances are exposed. This is especially the case with Barth and Bultmann, to mention the two men studied as specific examples in seeking to assess the nature of ethical responsibility at the point of exegesis. Quite distinct differences between Barth and Bultmann become conspicuous at the point of seeking to 'hear' specific texts.

Barth in his Romans commentary paid proper respect to the historical critical scholars, acknowledging the necessity and validity of their concerns. But it was the preaching situation which led Barth to assert that responsibility in interpretation of the text of the Bible involved more than had been forwarded by the main currents of historical critical study in his day. Previous mention has been made concerning his 'impatience with historical critical study'.[605] In the second part of Volume I of the Church Dogmatics Barth details some of the guidelines set forth in the Preface to the Romans commentary.[606] There Barth acknowledges that because the Word in Scripture assumes the form of human words interpretation is needed. He writes, "Human words need interpretation because as such they are ambiguous, not usually, of course, in the intention of those who speak, but always for those who hear . . . . since God's Word in Scripture has taken the form of a human word, it has itself incurred the need of such interpretation. Our human responsibility is related to this need of interpretation, and thus to Scripture expressed in human words."[607] But Barth insists that responsibility in interpretation ". . . must consist in all circumstances in the freely performed act of subordinating all human concepts, ideas, and convictions to the witness of revelation supplied to us in Scripture."[608] His concern centers on the insistence that we seek to discover the Word in the given words, and not subject the text of Scripture to various schemes of criticism because the ideas in Scripture do not conform to our ideas. It is our schemes of thought which must be subordinated to what we find in Scripture, and not vice versa. This does not mean simple repetition of Biblical words and ideas, as substitute for our own thinking. That would not be realistic. On this score Barth writes,

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[605] Supra, p. 54.

[606] C.D. I 2, p. 710 ff.

> It is not as though we had simply to abandon and forget our ideas, thoughts, and convictions. We certainly cannot do that, just as little as we can free ourselves from our own shadow . . . . Subordination does not mean the elimination and annihilation of our own resources. . . . It means placing oneself behind, following, complying as subordinate to superior . . . . It cannot mean that we have to allow our ideas, thoughts, and convictions to be supplanted, so to speak by those of the prophets and apostles, or that we have to begin to speak the language of Canaan instead of our own tongue. In that case we should not have subordinated ourselves to them, but at most adorned ourselves with their feathers . . . . Subordination if it is to be sincere, must concern the purpose and meaning indicated in the ideas, thoughts and convictions of the prophets

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[607] C.D. I 2, pp. 712-713.

[608] C.D. I 2, p. 715.

> and apostles, that is, the testimony which, by what they say as human beings like ourselves, they wish to bear . . . . The decisive point is that in scriptural exegesis Scripture itself as a witness to revelation must have unconditional precedence of all the evidence of our own being and becoming, our own thoughts and endeavors, hope and suffering, of all the evidence of intellect and sense, of all axioms and theorems, which we inherit and as such bear with us.[609]

Barth goes on to suggest that Scriptural interpretation involves the acts of observation, reflection, and application, and integral to the discussion in each category is the repeated concern to let what is actually said in the text be the guide to what is said in interpretation. He insists that interpretation

> . . . will not distort the text by trying to obscure and level down and render innocuous its real object. It will allow the text to say what, controlled by its object, it does actually say in its historical contingence. In doing this and to this extent, in so far as it can happen in fulfilment of the human task posed, it will explain, unfold and affirm its real historical sense, and thus make it possible to follow the sense of the text itself, what it does actually say.[610]

Recognition is given to the fact that every exegete works with some philosophy, but that philosophy must expose itself to correction and revision by what is actually said in the text and must not insist that the text be subordinated to the particular contentions of the given philosophy.[611] At every turn, the issue at hand, for Barth, is "The Word in the Words." Interpretation should proceed on the basis of the intention of the words found in the text. Historical critical study may well lead to more pertinent understanding of what is there in the text, but the issue is what is there. After all proper excursions have been made in discerning the various types of material present in the text--legend, history, saga, etc.,--the interpreter comes back to the text with the attempt to determine what is to be said on the basis of what is said in the words. He characterizes this procedure, as indicated previously, as a kind of historical critical naivety.[612] On Barth's score, then, one can say that ethical responsibility in 'hearing' involves germane historical critical research and appropriate observation, reflection, and application all committed to 'hear' what is there in the text as such. The basic concern seems to focus on clearly understanding the intention of the author in what he has set forth in the text of Scripture. Interpretation is subordinated to what is there.

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[609] C.D. I 2, pp. 718-719.

[610] C.D. I 2, p. 726.

[611] Cf. the discussion of the use to be made of the philosophy or system of thought with which one comes to interpretation. C.D. I 2, pp. 729-736.

However, with Bultmann a different scheme of responsibility in exegesis emerges. In his early work, Jesus and the Word,[613] he unfolds basic outlines of his guidance in 'hearing', and subsequent years reveal the development of basic presuppositions suggested in this early work. Bultmann contends that historical critical tools are to be used to unravel the various strada of material that have found their way into a given text. Much of what has come to us in the canonical writings of the New Testament is the result of developing traditions in the early church. Elements of early Catholicism, Gnosticism, and various other currents of the first century have been woven into the given canonical texts and the responsibility of the exegete involves the attempt to feret out these elements in the attempt to get at the earliest, and supposedly more valid, traditions. Bultmann describes his concern in the Preface to Jesus and the Word in this way:

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[612] Cf. C. D. IV 2, p. 478.

[613] Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus and the Word (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958)(E.T.).

> Critical investigation shows that the whole tradition about Jesus which appears in the three synoptic gospels is composed of a series of layers which can on the whole be clearly distinguished, although the separation at some points is difficult and doubtful . . . . The separating of these layers in the synoptic gospels depends on the knowledge that these gospels were composed in Greek within the Hellenistic Christian community, while Jesus and the oldest Christian group lived in Palestine and spoke Aramaic. Hence everything in the synoptics which for reasons of language or content can have originated only in Hellenistic Christianity must be excluded as a source for the teaching of Jesus. The critical analysis shows, however, that the essential content of these three gospels was taken over from the Aramaic tradition of the oldest Palestinian community. Within the Palestinian material again different layers can be distinguished, in which whatever betrays the specific interests of the church or reveals characteristics of later development must be rejected as secondary. By means of this critical analysis an oldest layer is determined, though it can be marked off with only relative exactness. Naturally we have no absolute assurance that the exact words of this oldest layer were really spoken by Jesus. There is a possibility that the contents of this oldest layer are also the result of a complicated historical process which we can no longer trace.[614]

The groundwork is laid in such a statement for the procedure of Sachkritik, content criticism, as an integral facet of exegesis. Opposed to Barth's insistence on 'The Word in the words', Bultmann posits the necessity of historical and content criticism to determine what 'words' in the text of the New Testament are to be the concern of the interpreter as basis for what he will say.

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[614] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

While the book Jesus and the Word does not explore the gospel of John or Paul, it remains that something of the same principles are applied in subsequent work on John and Paul. In his commentary on John, for instance, Bultmann uses the tools of literary and theological criticism to reconstruct what he considers to be the original form of John's gospel prior to additions by the redactor(s). Such an undertaking, as an exercise in literary criticism is not especially unusual. But what Bultmann does with this reconstructed text is unusual, for it occurs that in his commentary the reconstructed text becomes the subject of discussion. Dwight M. Smith, Jr. makes a pertinent comment on Bultmann's procedure in the John commentary in the following words,

> . . . the implications of Bultmann's work go beyond the bounds of literary criticism and historical study. The way in which he appropriates his results in the exposition of the gospel's message and the incorporation of that message in his theology sets an impressive precedent for the use of modern critical analysis in the definition of the locus of the essential message of the Biblical text. He has taken the gospel at what he discerns to be one particular stage of its literary development--namely, that between the weaving together of the sources and the final editing--as the authoritative document through which the revelatory word may be heard. One particular complex of literary strada, representing one state in the gospel's development, is isolated by the methods of higher criticism, made the subject of interpretation, and held to be authoritative and indeed, canonical.[615]

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[615] Dwight Moody Smith, Jr., The Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel, Bultmann's Literary Theory (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 245.

Smith goes on to state that

> Bultmann's procedure raises to a critical point the question of the role of higher criticism in making accessible the revelatory word assumed to be available in scripture. It is scarcely to be maintained that criticism should not play an important role in illuminating the message of the New Testament, but when this same criticism helps define the possibility of speaking and hearing the Word of God by putting aside certain sections of a New Testament book as secondary corruptions of the document's original message, has it not overstepped its limits?[616]

It is apparent that Bultmann's Sachkritk, however one may choose to answer the question posed by Smith, implies that ethical responsibility in 'hearing' involves more than attending to 'the Word in the words'.

Another facet of Bultmann's proposal for 'hearing' involves the procedure labeled 'demythologizing'. It can be argued that the presuppositions established in the procedure of Sachkritik in Jesus and the Word and in the exposition of the theology of Paul and John in other contexts lay the groundwork for the kind of 'content criticism' involved in demythologizing.[617] That is, even when the earliest text has been established through literary and theological criticism, there is still present 'myth' which reflects the thought world of the first century. And that 'myth' must be subjected to content criticism. As indicated earlier, Bultmann's aim is not elimination of such myth, but interpretation of it. After discerning as accurately as he can the intention of the author, Bultmann recognizes that there are structures of thought in the author's way of putting things that are products of his time and are not essential to an understanding of the gospel. Lest these 'myth-structures' present to the hearer scandal at the wrong place they must be interpreted in categories which modern man can understand. For Bultmann, such categories are available in existentialism and he utilizes such for interpretation of the myth in the New Testament. His prevailing concern pivots on the modern man who hears the word of the gospel and who needs to be confronted with the scandal of the gospel at the point of the real scandal, namely God's Word in Jesus Christ. Sachkritik and demythologizing are employed by Bultmann as responsible devices in 'hearing' to the end of locating the scandal of the gospel at the right point and eliminating the probability of modern man's 'stumbling' at the wrong point.

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[616] Ibid., p. 245.

[617] Cf. James Smart, The Divided Mind of Modern Theology, op. cit., p. 157 ff.

The above characterizations of the basic concerns of Barth and Bultmann in 'hearing' the text of the Biblical witness are admittedly sketchy. But even in such a sketch it is obvious that important differences enter and that the differences are pertinent to an understanding of what ethical responsibility in 'hearing' involves.

Of course, the discussion concerning responsible hearing could be greatly enlarged by seeking to incorporate the suggestions of other notable scholars who follow different guidelines than those set out by either Barth or Bultmann. If such were attempted the result would doubtless lead to the recognition that there is no agreed upon procedure among scholars when it comes to assessing responsible 'hearing' of particular texts. It is, of course, true that there are areas of agreement, witness the document published under the auspices of the World Council of Churches where Biblical scholars from various traditions sought to give at least minimal guidelines for exegesis.[618] But that document is somewhat dated and the state of exegesis continues to be characterized by wide divergences, a situation which presents continuing difficulty for the preacher in his attempts at responsible 'hearing' in preparation of a sermon.[619]

The matter of ethical responsibility in 'hearing' involves the insistence that 'hearing' a particular text is one integral facet in preaching, but it remains that we cannot at this point, and doubtless will not be able to in the future, arrive at some legalistic code of exegesis. Basic guidelines and principles in the exercise of ethical responsibility in 'hearing' can be suggested as the preacher turns to his colleagues in the Biblical field. But precise suggestions and procedures cannot be forwarded for the act of 'hearing' in every instance. It is certainly not my argument that we can adjudicate between Barth and Bultmann, declaring one or the other to be 'ethically responsible', with the indication that then one or the other is irresponsible. Pertinent questions can be put to the procedures of both men, as indicated by previous discussion. The preacher can turn to Barth and Bultmann, as well as others, for guidance, but no precise code of responsible exegesis can be proposed.

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[618] Cf. G. Ernest Wright, "The Problem of Archaizing Ourselves" Interpretation, III, No. 4 (October, 1949), 457-459.

[619] Special attention is called to the essay by Rudolf Bohren who suggests that the crisis in preaching is the result of a confusion in the exegetical proposals of contemporary Biblical scholarship. Bohren writes as a practical theologian on the Continent, but his concerns and challenges to Biblical scholars contain much that is pertinent on the American scene. Cf. Bohren, Preaching and Community, op. cit., p. 79 ff.

The important matter, it seems to me, is that in whatever procedure the preacher uses in his attempt to 'hear' the crucial matter revolves around the insistence that ethically responsible preaching involves concerted effort in attempting to root preaching in 'hearing'. Various procedures will be employed and subsequently criticized. But the substantive issue is whether the procedures and disciplines used leave both preacher and congregation in lively conversation with the given text. If the witness of the text is obscured by either homiletical propositions or discussion of method and presupposition in exegesis things are amiss.

It can be acknolwedged, also, that rigidity in exegetical method is questionable on at least two other scores. First, it is highly questionable that any one method of exegesis will prove adequate for all texts. The varied character of the different writings in the Bible certainly does not lend itself readily to a single approach to 'hearing'. Indeed, rigidity in exegetical method might signify the worst form of Pharisaism in exercising ethical responsibility in 'hearing'. Different texts will involve different procedures for integral 'hearing'. Rigidity in exegetical method may result in the same obliviousness which would result in seeking to approach every human person and every situation with one rigid way of defining people and their varied involvement in different life situations. Just as the reality of persons and their situation is too varied to fit a rigid mold for understanding, communication, and action, so the reality of the Biblical witness is too complex to submit to legalistic methods of exegesis.

Secondly, another pertinent factor involved in exegesis is the person of the exegete. Bultmann seeks to give german attention to facets of this factor in his insistence that all interpretation involves the question which the interpreter brings to the text of scripture. Some question has agitated the interpreter in turning to these, or any documents, out of the past, and though these questions should not prejudice the results of interpretation they do have significant bearing on the whole enterprise. It seems to me that the perspective of the person involved in the task of 'hearing' should be explored more widely. The person who as preacher seeks to fulfil the responsibility of 'hearing' comes not only with his peculiar questions, but he comes with his particular abilities and equipment. To be quite specific, it may well be that the preacher of some sect may bring to the task of hearing very limited educational background and exegetical skill. It may be that reading the text several times in the King James version of the Bible will represent the extent of his skill and endeavor in 'hearing'. Are we to say that such effort is too naive and limited for germane 'hearing'? Of course, it may be that the preacher comes well trained in language, historical criticism, hermeneutics, and theology, and that means that in his person he brings to the task of 'hearing' a different range of possibilities. His 'hearing' will proceed from much more sophisticated exegesis, and certainly such a person is responsible to employ all the skills available to him. But it would seem to me that it would be treading on dangerous ground to declare that the person with the more limited educational background and more naive technique is ethically irresponsible in his efforts to 'hear' the text of scripture.

What I am suggesting is that while 'hearing' involves every effort to utilize basic guidelines and tools of Biblical scholarship, the utilization of such does not per se assure more responsible hearing, and that due consideration needs to be given to the total person of the preacher who exercises the task of 'hearing'.

The result of the above lines leads to the conclusion that at least the following three factors are integral to ethically responsible 'hearing' for the preacher. First, preaching is grounded in 'hearing'. This, of course, is reasserting the fundamental point made about the basis of preaching earlier, but it is re-emphasized in this context as attention is focused on the tasks involved in a particular sermon. For whatever reason the preacher may come to the text it remains that one undergirding responsibility revolves around the openness to 'hear' the text in such a way that the witness of the text may redirect, redefine, challenge, and reshape the concerns of the particular sermon. The recurring question of ethical responsibility at this point turns on the question of whether the sermon represents an attempt to allow the witness of the text to be the substantive basis of the sermon. Secondly, specific responsibility in 'hearing' involves every effort to discern the intention of the writer of the particular text. Exegetical tools are used to the end of seeking to attend to what is there in the text, to actually be open to 'hear'. Quite apart from all the questions the preacher or congregation may have, it is the pointed responsibility of the preacher to seek to give the text an open 'hearing'. To be sure, the questions of the exegete cannot be erased, but they must surely not so dominate the conversation with the text as to stiffle integral 'hearing' of what is being said in the text. It is difficult enough to hear the conversation with living persons; it is even more difficult to hear on the basis of the printed word; and perhaps still more difficult to hear when the focus of attention is on hearing a word from a printed text from the first century (or before). How easy it is to cut off conversation whether with person or printed word by hasty insistence on our own reading of things. Specific exegesis utilizing the available tools involves the preacher in the task of deliberately and patiently attending to what is there in the text in the effort to 'hear' the word of the Biblical writer. Honest dialogue involves integral openness to hear the other person(s) involved. That is at least one of the fundamental struggles of the preacher in his study, and integrity at this point is basic to ethically responsible 'hearing'. Finally, one test of responsible 'hearing' turns on the question of whether both the preacher and the congregation are left in lively conversation with the text as a means of discerning the Word of the living God to a living congregation. I am here seeking to look at the sermon from the perspective of its completion. After the sermon has been preached is it the case that the hearers have been initiated into a pertinent conversation with the particular text? Has the responsibility of 'hearing' been so integral to the whole process of preaching that in the end both preacher and congregation are involved in continuing dialogue (in admittedly numerous possible ways) with the text of Scripture? It seems to me that the theological affirmations about the centrality of Jesus Christ as he is known in the witness of Scripture serves to make the aim of the sermon a continuing conversation with the text rather than an occasional exposure to an ancient writing as is the case in too many sermons.

A third important consideration in responsibility in 'hearing' concerns the idea that 'hearing' the text of the Bible as the vehicle of discerning God's word is decidedly a 'present-tense' undertaking. The preacher turns to a text whose 'dateline' may bear the mark of years past, but the issue at stake is discerning what the living and present God has to say to and do with his covenant people today. Both Barth and Bultmann are helpful at points in highlighting the fact that the One with whom we have to do is the living God in his immediate history with His people. Such, of course, may sound like an empty cliche but it is my conviction that even at the risk of 'cliche' such a reality needs heavy underlining when it comes to the issue of preaching, and specifically preaching whose basis is the Biblical witness. Precisely because we seek to turn to documents from the past as basis for present understanding it is all too easy to fall into a 'past-present' dichotomy in thinking of the sermon. In this scheme the preacher stands as something of a 'middle-man' trying to grasp the past with one hand and the present with another and through main strength and effort bring the two together. J. J. Von Allman, for instance, entitles one chapter in his Preaching and Congregation "The Two Poles of Preaching,"[620] referring to the 'pole' of the Biblical witness and the 'pole' of the congregation in the present situation. To be sure, these two 'poles' are facets of the preaching situation, but it seems to me

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Jean-Jacques Von Allman, Preaching and Congregation (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1962), p. 20.

unfortunate to establish a 'polarity' of this sort, If we are to use the 'pole' reference let it be acknowledged that the one 'pole' of preaching is the living God in His present history with His people. In order to discern what God is up to with His people today we seek to 'hear' by listening to the witness of prophets and apostles in the present situation.

Responsible 'hearing' involves disciplined study. The preacher is especially equipped by specific training for the task of 'responsible hearing'. He utilizes all the exegetical skills he can marshall and looks with gratitude to his partners in the Biblical field for help given and hopefully for help forthcoming. But however he may go about his study it is manifestly the case that he does not somehow magically put on a 'first-century hat' and become an ancient man. He is very much a 20th century man involved in disciplined study of particular documents from the past, but his study of these documents is a 'present-tense' experience in which the issue is discernment of what the ever-present God seeks to do with His people in the present situation. The pattern of Biblical preaching which devotes the first half of the sermon to a detailed 'past-tense' discussion of the text coupled with a delayed turn to the present is deadly. Too often such preaching gives the idea that somehow God was active 'back then', and we subsequently draw some general principles for 'application' in the contemporary situation. My contention is that from beginning to end the burden of preaching is a 'present-tense' undertaking, the attempt to grasp anew God's dealing with His people today. The basis for such understanding stems from lively 'hearing' of the witness of texts from the past, but the issue throughout is the present activity of the living God.

Both Barth and Bultmann challenge contemporary preaching at this point. It is quite true that there are challenges to be put to the two men in the way in which they go about this task. Barth can be faulted in his preaching for sophisticated jumps from the text to Christological interpretation or dogmatic conclusions that seem to leave the hearer in the dark as to the path followed in such jumps. Bultmann, in his manifest concern for present significance, may radicalize the concern for the present to the point of apparent collapse of contact with the past. But it remains, that even though certain programmatic corrections are needed, both men strongly challenge the preacher today to see his task 'at his desk' during the week and 'in the pulpit' on Sunday as one where the issue at stake is the present word of God to His people.

A fourth factor in the responsible behavior of 'hearing' points to the character of the preacher's hearing of the text as 'vicarious hearing'. That is, in fulfillment of the particular functions given him by the community of faith, the preacher in his disciplined study is involved in the task of 'hearing' for the congregation he serves. In the economy of the church's life certain men are specifically trained and equipped for the functions of leadership as pastors and preachers. Such a scheme serves to recognize and utilize the distribution of 'gifts' given to a particular community of faith. Just as all the 'gifts' given to various members are for the sake of the whole community in its obedient life, the 'preacher' exercises his 'gifts' and skills in 'hearing' the text of the Biblical witness for the sake of the entire community. He studies diligently in his disciplined labor of exegesis, but always such study is 'vicarious'.

He seeks to 'hear' for the sake of the entire community as together they seek to understand anew the promise and the claim of God upon their life together.

It seems to me that one thing to be gained by underscoring the 'vicarious' nature of the preacher's hearing of the Biblical witness is an understanding of the preacher's vital but limited function as a member of the contemporary community of faith. He takes his place as a responsible Christian in a community of Christians. To him are designated certain vital tasks, one of which is the task of responsible 'hearing' for the sake of the whole community. He is not in the community of faith as a 'paragon of Christian virtue'. He is not there as 'substitute layman', seeking to do all the things the church ought to be doing as 'official representative' of the church. Other members of the community of faith have been given distinct gifts for other vital tasks germane to the church's life and obedience in the world. The preacher's gifts and tasks are limited, though of course, quite vital to the total life of the church. But it remains that he is simply one member among many who together seek to fulfill the task of responsible witness in the world.

All of this may be quite obvious, but it can be argued that in far too many cases the Protestant Christian community has been characterized by a functional sacerdotalism whereby the entire life of the church pivots on the character of the preacher's witness and obedience. Many factors contribute to such practical sacerdotalism which it is not our purpose to explore here. But it remains that there is more than a casual slip of the tongue involved when we refer to a particular church by primary reference to the preacher of that church. It would be my hope that by underscoring the task of 'hearing' as a vicarious task, one benefit would be the recognition that within the total life of the community of faith the preacher takes his place as a member of that community with specific and limited gifts and responsibilities, one of the most vital responsibilities being that of 'vicarious hearing'. When the members of a particular church gather for corporate worship, coming from various stations of responsible discipleship in the world, the specific task of the preacher, among other things, is to come before them as one who has sought to 'hear' for them the witness of scripture as it points to the vital promise and claim of God in His ongoing life with this particular people.

One further hoped-for benefit of the emphasis on vicarious hearing has to do with the 'image' of the preacher in his function of preacing. With the concerted emphasis on the sermon as an occasion for the Word of God coupled with the traditional architecture which places the pulpit in a prominent position it is all too easy for popular piety to conceive a polarity between 'pulpit' and 'pew'. Somehow God and the preacher seem to be on one side, and the congregation in the pew on the other. Such a scheme serves to negate the reality that the preacher is simply a member of the congregation with particular gifts and specified tasks who for the sake of the congregation takes his place in the pulpit to fulfill for the congergation the task of preaching. While it is right to look expectantly to the sermon as an occasion for God's Word to His people, it is the case that the preacher fulfills his function on behalf of the congregation and his task there is one with them in seeking to 'hear' what God has to say to His people. Understanding from the outset of study 'at the desk' during the week that the preacher's task is one of 'vicarious hearing' may give the sermon a different character where it is manifest that the preacher takes his place with those in the pew as a member of a community which seeks to discern what God has to do with them today. The preacher is pointedly one with the congregation in seeking to 'hear'. Such a scheme hopefully would highlight the fact that the preacher's task is one of responsible ethical behavior in which he seeks to represent the church in its obedient task of witness in the form of the sermon. One decisive facet of such responsible behavior is 'vicarious hearing' of the Biblical witness for the sake of the entire community of faith.

Previous discussion has sought to distinguish two characteristics of preaching as responsible ethical action, i.e., the character of the sermon as representative action, and the character of the sermon as responsible 'hearing' of the Biblical witness as the basis of the action of preaching. One further characteristic, implicit in what has been said, but needing specific attention remains to be discussed.

That third characteristic of preaching as responsible ethical action is 'perception' of the significance of 'hearing' for the present situation. There are various ways to try to express what I am seeking to include in the idea of 'perception'. Barth uses the traditional categories of applicatio and evangelical address. Bultmann speaks of 'challenge to self-understanding'. Some homiletical treatises refer to immediacy. Most all discussions of preaching have sought in one way or another to insist that the sermon must focus on present meaning for the congregation. From many quarters there arises the clamor for 'relevance'. And contingent to all such discussion is the question of 'hermeneutical principles'.

I do not want to quibble over words, nor do I want to try here to move into extensive discussion of hermeneutical principles. What I do want to do, however, is recognize that the issue of perceiving the significance of responsible 'hearing' of the Biblical text is not simply a desired facet of preaching. It is germane to responsible ethical behavior in the pulpit. Manifestly what I am saying is that the sermon which chooses to remain in some past-tense discussion of the text, or the sermon which is couched in safe but meaningless theological jargon or cliches, or the sermon which views life through narrow pietistic or religious glasses, is ethically irresponsible. An irreducible facet of preaching consists of the risky venture of perceiving how the situation of the present community of faith is materially affected by the 'hearing' of a specific text.

The word 'perception' is chosen to characterize this facet of preaching with the hope that the task of perceiving the significance of 'hearing' will be involved from the beginning to the end of the sermon preparation and delivery. The burden of the task of 'hearing' turns on the task of 'perception' of present significance. As the preacher in his study seeks to 'hear' with and for a particular congregation his concern turns repeatedly to the issue of perceiving the significance of such for the particular congregation for whom he fulfills the task of preaching. As he stands in the pulpit the issue is not primarily Biblical instruction but from beginning to end the issue is perception of what the living God seeks to say to and do with this particular people using the given text as basic cue for understanding. Materially this implies that leaving the idea of 'application' to the last few minutes of the sermon may well be faulty form.

While there are various suggestions that may be made as to the procedure one might follow in the 'perception' of significance, there are no neat sure-fire hermeneutical principles to be offered here. Marcus Barth speaks quite to the point when he writes,

> The belief that one hermeneutic system might serve as an "Open sesame" to all chambers of exegetical mysteries is preposterous and superstitious . . . . Just as there is no key to understanding each living person, so there is no one method for the whole Bible.[621]

It is my argument, however, that one persistent fact of responsible ethical action in preaching is the pursuit of the question of the significance of 'hearing' the text at hand. The preacher may well ask all along, "What difference does 'hearing' this text make in the life of this particular congregation?" The reading of a text adds something dynamic to the total situation of the gathered congregation. The community assembles for worship, and among other things, a portion of Scripture is read. That can become either an action of meaningless tradition or a dynamic event in which something vital is added to the situation of the gathered congregation. The point of departure for this sermon may well be recognition that the total situation of the gathered congregation is significantly altered by 'hearing' the reading of the Scripture. Something 'new', even though it is an old text, has been added to the situation and the question before the gathering now becomes one of perceiving how the situation is changed by the particular word that has been 'added to the agenda'. By way of analogy, suppose a group planning a political campaign sits around a table discussing various strategies. Someone comes in with the late news that the opponent in the race has just made a dramatic statement or move. The situation of that planning group is materially affected by the word that has been put on the table. Something new is on the agenda. The situation is changed. Subsequent plans must now take into account the word of the opponent's move. The task for this group is perceiving the significance of this news. In something of an analogous situation a congregation gathers. The Scripture is read, and the situation of the congregation is materially affected. The question before the gathered community of faith now turns on what 'hearing' that particular word does to their situation in the world? What material difference does it make? The sermon as responsible ethical behavior bearing witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ bears the dual task of perceiving the meaning of the particular text at hand and its significance for the present situation of a particular community of faith.

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[621] Marcus Barth, Conversation with the Bible (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1964), p. 179.

There are, to be sure, many pitfalls and perils involved in the task of perceiving the significance of the given text. It is quite possible that the preacher will move all too rapidly to the question of 'relevance', venturing to explore present significance before he has in reality explored the character and meaning of the witness from prophets and Apostles. It is also the case that so much emphasis can be placed on present significance that in reality the essential relation to the text from Scripture becomes at best casual. Again, the preacher's preconceived ideas of what he wants to 'preach about', doubtless something he sees as important for a particular congregation, may well stiffle integral 'hearing' of the text of scripture. Or it may be the case that previous 'hearing' of a text prejudices the preacher to the degree that he is willing to settle for his own previous or traditional interpretation of a text, and move to the issue of significance without material attention to the text as it is heard in the present situation. Still again, stereotyped 'hearing' whereby all texts somehow lead to a narrow range of traditional or 'religious' topic may impair pertinent attention to the text at hand. One could go on and on describing what might be called 'hermeneutical perils'. Certainly the preacher should be aware of such. But giving all due recognition to the perils involved, there remains the imperative to pursue the issue of perception of the present significance of the 'hearing' of the text as a basic ingredient of responsible ethical behavior in the pulpit. Certainly the theological definitions of preaching involved in the study of Barth and Bultmann serve to make the matter of present significance an integral facet of the action of preaching.

As indicated, it is not the purpose of this essay to launch into detailed discussion of ways in which the preacher may or should go about the task of perceiving the present significance of 'hearing'. The vital matter at hand in this discussion is simply to affirm that behavior in the study and the pulpit in response to the commission of God to bear witness in the form of the sermon involves the preacher in the risky business of seeking to perceive the present significance of 'hearing' a particular text in a particular situation. The issue is not just one of 'desirable' homiletical practice, but rather on the score of the theological definition of preaching forwarded involves the issue of the ethical integrity of the action of the preacher.

D. Concluding Summary: This essay began with the recognition of the focus on preaching manifest in the works of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann and the desire to explore from the standpoint of a practical theologian on the American scene the what and the why of this focus. Two longer chapters have been devoted to exploration of the questions of why each of the men makes such elaborate claims for preaching and what they affirm about preaching. The final chapter has been an attempt to forward judgements and critiques about the focus on preaching found in the two men coupled with an attempt to appropriate certain basic emphases in a theological perspective on preaching. The primary contention of the preceding discussion has been that there is both need and basis for enlarging the discussion of preaching by defining preaching in terms of responsible ethical action. The theological affirmations concerning preaching raise the question of appropriate behavior consistent with such affirmations which in turn points to the question of ethical action. The argument of this work is that in the case of preaching the ethical side of the theological discussion of preaching needs to be defined more deliberately. Recognition has been given to the fact that in discussing preaching as ethical action we move into a discussion of special ethics or ethics with pointed reference to one facet of the church's total obedient life. Subsequently the attempt has been made to describe three basic characteristics of preaching as ethical action in response to the commission of God. The discussion of these three characteristics has deliberately been 'suggestive' and not exhaustive for the main contention of this essay is not to establish a homiletical program, but rather to argue that the prevailing theological discussion of preaching needs to be enlarged to include germane considerations of the character of preaching as ethical action.

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